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["WHEN YOU ARE ABROAD," CONTINUED HILDA, "YOU WILL REMEMBER THERE IS SOMEONE IN ENGLAND WHO PRAYS FOR YOUR WELFARE."]

HILDA'S FORTUNES.

—10:—

CHAPTER XI.

THE Manor House, which was the residence of Ida St. John's father, was a rambling, old-fashioned sort of place that might have been taken for a farmstead of unusually large dimensions. It was a gloomy house too; the shrubs and evergreens had been allowed to luxuriate in unpruned freedom, and as there were a great many of these, it followed as a consequence that they darkened the lower windows very considerably, and generated an unhealthy damp, whose effect could hardly have been good for the members of the house-
hold.

Ida St. John was an only child, and her life had been, up to the present, far from a bright one. Her father was a scholar, wholly devoted to his studies, and partially embittered by some early disappointment of which he never spoke. His time was chiefly spent in his library, and, kind as he was, he seemed quite unconscious that he had any

duties beyond it, or that his daughter had now shot up into womanhood, and required any extra parental supervision.

Ida's nature was essentially a happy one, as was evinced by its flourishing under these unfavourable conditions; but there were times when she thought she would like to participate more in the gaieties and amusements natural to her age, and the particular evening of which we write—the day before Christmas Day—was one of them.

She was seated in the deep window recess of the library—a homely enough apartment, its walls lined with books, its curtains faded, its Turkey carpets wearing threadbare.

Sir Douglas St. John, a man with a thin patrician face that must once have been handsome, but now looked careworn, was busy writing at the centre-table, with a high pile of books on either side, to which he occasionally referred.

"Papa!"

He started slightly, and replied without turning his head.

"Well?"

"I want to speak to you, seriously."

Sir Douglas smiled and laid down his pen.

"I am ready to listen, my dear," he said, mildly, as he pushed his chair a little way from the table, and turned it half round, so that he faced the small, graceful figure in the window recess.

Ida looked very grave, which was unusual with her, but her attire had so many touches of scarlet and flashes of gold about it that she might have been taken for some brilliant tropical bird, strayed from its own land. She was twisting her fingers in and out of each other rather nervously.

"Papa, I want to know why you and the Earl of Westlynn are not friends?"

If she had brought a piece of dynamite, and placed it before him, standing over it with a lighted match, she could hardly have startled him more. His face, always pale, grew ashen, and he put his hand to his mouth as if he would hide the twitching of the lips, which it was beyond his power to control.

"Why do you ask such a question? What can have put the notion into your head?" he exclaimed, after the pause of a moment, during which he had partly regained his self-

possession. "Has anyone been talking to you?"

Ida raised her delicately pencilled brows in astonishment.

"Talking to me, papa! What do you mean?"

"I mean, has anyone said anything that could lead you to suppose Lord Westlynn and I have cause for hating each other?"

"Certainly not. I should never have put my ideas in such strong terms as 'hating,' although I knew you and the Earl were not friendly."

"Then what made you ask me about him?"

If Ida had answered with perfect candour she would have had to confess her acquaintance with, and interest in, Viscount Dering, but this she did not feel herself called upon to do, inasmuch as she knew such a declaration would be the death-knell of that acquaintance.

"Well, papa, I really don't think you need be surprised at the question," she said, quickly, "for it is a most natural one. You and Lord Westlynn are two of the greatest landowners of the county, your estates join, and your politics are the same, therefore the natural inference is that you should be friends, and visit each other."

"I visit nobody, as you are aware."

"I know that, but other gentlemen call on you, and you receive them in a friendly manner, whereas you never mention Lord Westlynn's name."

"Nor do I ever desire to hear it mentioned," he replied, with stern gravity. "The subject is one I did not wish broached in my presence, but as you have seen fit to introduce it I tell you, once for all, that it must be for the last time. 'Do you understand me, Ida?'"

The girl had grown very pale. This conversation meant more to her than she would have confessed to any living soul, and perhaps to this fact may be attributed her next remark.

"Papa," she said boldly, "when I was a little girl you told me to always ask for reasons when I did not understand anything. Shall you think me very impertinent if I do so now?"

The Baronet stared at her in astonishment, not unmingled with uneasiness.

"I told you to ask for reasons for the purpose of increasing your mental knowledge, but not for the purpose of prying into my private affairs. Have I not given you sufficient answer to satisfy you?"

"You have given me no answer at all, and it is not my place to press you for one," she said, tears dimming her bright eyes; "but all the same, papa, I must press you to tell me this—can the quarrel between you and Lord Westlynn ever be appeased?"

"Never!"

"Not if someone you loved—someone you loved very much indeed—stood in the breach between you?" she pursued, anxiously.

"What do you mean—who do you mean? Oh! great heavens!" cried Sir Douglas incoherently, and in a strange, hoarse voice as if he were violently agitated, as indeed he was.

Ida, shocked beyond expression at the effect of her words, ran to his side, and fell on her knees, while she seized his hand in both of hers.

"Forgive me, papa, I did not mean to wound you; I did not, indeed."

He removed his other hand from his face, and looked down into her eyes very searchingly.

"Tell me the truth, Ida, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," he said, impressively. "Who instigated you to speak as you have spoken?"

She returned his gaze with a calm steadfastness that vouched for her veracity.

"No one, papa, on my honour. I had been thinking the matter over in my own mind, and as it was a mystery to me I determined

to come to you for its solution. Don't you believe me?"

He did not reply, and she added, reproachfully,—

"I have never told you an untruth in my life."

The words seemed to touch him, and he bent down to kiss her brow.

"I know it, my dear, and I believe you now; only, Ida, I cannot satisfy your curiosity, although I acknowledge it to be a legitimate one. I am older than you, my child, and my experience has been much greater, so by virtue of it you must give me credit for being wiser, and therefore believe I have a good motive for my reticence. This much I will tell you—Lord Westlynn has done me a great wrong."

"But cannot atonement be made?" murmured Ida, in a stifled voice.

He shook his head.

"No atonement but—Death!"

Ida rose to her feet, and it was pathetic to see the change that had taken place in her face during these few minutes. She was quite white, and her large eyes looked larger and darker by contrast. Her father noticed it, and attributed it to sympathy with him. He drew her to him very tenderly.

"Thank Heaven, no shadow of the wrong has ever rested on you!" he muttered, and she turned away with a quick gesture that he could not understand, for it seemed to negative his words. "Let us change the subject," he added, drawing her to a stool at his feet where she very often sat. "What would you like to talk about?"

She smiled rather sadly, but did not reply. She was staring intently into the glowing embers of the fire, perhaps tracing there the remains of a shattered dream.

A welcome interruption took place by the entrance of a servant with the mail-bag, which Sir Douglas at once proceeded to open. From it he took a small square parcel, which he put into his daughter's hands.

"There, dear, that is my Christmas present to you, and I hope you will have as much pleasure in wearing it as I have in giving it to you."

Ida drew the paper wrappings off, and discovered a morocco case, lined with purple satin, on which reposed a necklace of large pear-shaped pearls, set in diamonds.

"How lovely!" she exclaimed, with all a girl's delight in pretty ornaments; "and how good of you to give it me, papa!"

He smiled, well pleased at her reception of his gift.

"You will be able to wear it at the officers' ball, next week. You see I have not forgotten you intend going."

The momentary colour that had flashed into her face died out, and her hands, with the glittering necklace, fell into her lap.

"I don't think I shall go now, papa."

"Not go? Why not?"

"Because—because, I don't think I shall care for it."

"My dear, Ida, what transformation has come over you?" exclaimed the Baronet, greatly surprised at this declaration. "Why, it was only yesterday you were rejoicing at the prospect of the dance!"

"I know I was, but yesterday is yesterday, and to-day is to-day," she returned, with an assumption of playfulness. "Women often change their minds, don't they?"

"Yes, but they generally have some reason for it, if the reason is but a trivial one."

"Well, then, believe I have a reason, and put it down as trivial if you like."

Sir Douglas was puzzled. He had long ago acknowledged that the caprices of the feminine sex were beyond his comprehension, but he had made an exception in favour of his own daughter, who had been always with him, and whom he fancied incapable of keeping a secret from him. He knew that when Mrs. Morton, of Morton Hall, had offered to take Ida to the ball with her own daughter, the

girl had been delighted. What could possibly have caused this sudden change of sentiment?

"But Ida, dear," he said, gently, "you must go, if only because you have promised Mrs. Morton."

"My staying away won't make any difference to her, unless it enables Myra Morton to get more partners," laughing mirthlessly—"and that they will be grateful for."

"Still," urged Sir Douglas, "you have 'come out,' as it is called, and everyone will be surprised at your absence. You had better go, my dear."

"Had I, papa?" She looked at him curiously. "Well, I will leave the decision with you, and accept as final whatever you may say."

"Then I say go!"

She bent her head and went back to her seat in the window recess, across which, when she had left it, she had drawn the curtains. The necklace was still in her hands, and she drew it thoughtfully through her fingers as she sat there musing.

To say that she was satisfied by the slender explanation given her by her father with regard to his relations with Lord Westlynn, would be wrong, but all the same, she did not see in what way she could learn more. True, she might inquire at other sources, and from them get information, but this was a course from which she naturally shrank, for it would be taking an unfair advantage of Sir Douglas, besides being entirely repugnant to her own frank and open disposition.

What could the "wrong" be of which the baronet spoke—a wrong so deadly that it could not be atoned for? Did Lord Dering know more about it than she did herself?

No. On this point she was quite clear, for if he was aware of any such impediment Arthur would never have approached her in the character of a lover, and pleaded for her heart as he had done.

Poor little wifed Ida! She had guarded her secret so very closely. She had first of all determined she would not fall in love with Viscount Dering, because nearly every other girl she knew had already done so; and when he, piqued by her indifference, had made hot love to her, she had coquetted and retreated, teased him and flirted with him, just as the humour seized her, without any thought of ulterior consequences.

Had she fallen into her own net?

Ah! that we must not say, for even to her own heart she would not confess it; but it is certain that during the young soldier's absence abroad with his regiment her thoughts had very often been with him, and she had seized on the papers directly they came in, in order to see what news there was from the seat of war.

Many a time, too, had a fervent thanksgiving gone up from her heart as she hastily skimmed down the list of wounded, and discovered there no name that she knew.

Up to now she had been sitting in the shadow of the curtains, but a sudden desire took hold of her to look out into the clear, starlight of the December night, and she rose and pulled back the drapery. Almost simultaneously a loud scream broke from her lips.

Her father looked up in alarm and hurried to her side.

"What is it—are you hurt?"

"No, but there is someone outside. I saw a face looking in through the window."

The baronet immediately drew back the drapery, and threw up the latch, then he looked out. There was nothing visible. The trees and shrubs all stood distinctly outlined in the starlight, but there was no indication of a human presence.

"You must have been mistaken, Ida."

"I was not mistaken," she said, firmly.

"The lamplight fell on it, and I distinctly saw a face—a pair of large, dark eyes looking straight at me. It disappeared immediately, and I think its owner must have been looking in, and have been taken by surprise by my sudden withdrawal of the curtain."

"Was it one of the household, do you think?"

"No, I am sure it was not, or I should have recognised it."

"Can you tell if it was a man or a woman?"

Hilda shook her head.

"No, for I only saw the upper part of the face, and I fancy the lower was purposely concealed."

The baronet rang the bell, and when it was answered gave orders that the grounds should be thoroughly searched, as he had reason to believe there was someone concealed in them.

This was done, but with no result, and when the butler came in to announce the failure of his mission, Sir Douglas turned to his daughter with rather a sceptical smile.

"Are you convinced now that it was fancy?"

"No, because I know it was not."

And she refused to be convinced in spite of all his arguments.

CHAPTER XII.

HILDA very speedily settled down to her new life and its duties, and made herself thoroughly popular, not only in the Castle itself, but in all the cottages belonging to the estate. She was so simple that the villagers would speak to her with as much confidence as if she had been one of themselves, and so beautiful that the mere sight of her was sufficient to brighten the duller of homes. "Our young lady," they called her, while they took as much interest in her as if she had grown up amongst them.

"For my part, I can't see what pleasure you find running in and out of dirty, poky little cottages, where the atmosphere is close enough to stifle you," remarked Evelyn, whose instincts certainly did not lead her to emulate her cousin's achievements. "If you want to be the 'Lady Bountiful' of the neighbourhood why don't you give the cottagers bread and soup—or even money?"

"Because I think they prefer—sympathy," Evelyn shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't agree with you. If you offered them 'sympathy' on the one hand, and half-a-sovereign on the other, I know very well which they would choose."

"Probably you are right, still they would rather have the half-sovereign accompanied by a few kindly words. The lives of the poor are very hard, and if it is in my power to render them less so it is clearly my duty to do it."

"I don't see the necessity. These people have been brought up to work, and work is natural to them—so is hard living, and if you let them think you believe otherwise you run the risk of spoiling them, and making them first discontented, and then rebellious. Why, all these ridiculous socialist agitations come from the upper classes having treated the lower classes too well! Let every one be kept in his place I say."

Hilda did not attempt to argue the point, for she knew it would be of no avail. With a slight laugh she turned away, saying—

"Well, we shall see what sort of a 'lady of the manor' you will make by-and-by, when you get married."

The words were simple enough, and lightly spoken, but they brought a wave of crimson to Evelyn's cheeks, and a strange light in her brilliant eyes, for they embodied an idea which was perpetually haunting her.

When she first came to the Castle she had been content with her destiny—inclined, indeed, to look upon it as a very lucky one, and to congratulate herself upon her good fortune, but as the days passed by, and she became accustomed to the novel splendours of her new home, a covetous envy grew up in her heart, which embittered every hour of her life, and strengthened daily.

Why had Hilda been selected by Fate as the heiress—Hilda, who really cared little for wealth, and would have been perfectly satis-

fied with the merest competence, so that loving companionship went with it?

Evelyn sighed impatiently, and went to the window, through which could be seen the park, with its plantations beyond, and the wide stretch of uplands, all of which owned Hilda as mistress. Looking at the view, she fell into a reverie, from which she was interrupted by her cousin's voice.

"I am going into the west wing of the Castle. Do you care to come with me?"

"The west wing!" repeated Evelyn, in a puzzled tone.

"Yes! to see Nadir. Don't you remember that he lives there?" said Hilda, laughing.

"I am not surprised that you have almost forgotten his existence, since we never see or hear anything of him."

"I wonder what he does with himself?" exclaimed the elder girl, with an appearance of interest. "Is he a student?"

"I expect so."

"Of what?"

Hilda laughed.

"The Occult Sciences, maybe!" she rejoined, lightly. "Perhaps we shall be able to tell after we have been to his rooms."

The west wing was quite apart from the rest of the Castle, of which, indeed, it hardly seemed to form part, for when the door leading into a long passage was closed it was entirely shut off—as much so as if it had been a separate building.

This door, however, on the present occasion was open, and through it Hilda and her cousin passed along a corridor, until they reached a second door, covered with green baize, which, being fastened, barred their further progress. Evelyn made a wry face as she tried to push it open.

"Looked out of your own house!" she exclaimed, grimly. "If I were in your place I should let Mr. Nadir know who was mistress and master."

"You forget," observed Hilda, with some hauteur, "you forget that he has as much right here as I have."

She pressed her finger on a small brass knob, which she supposed to be a bell, and immediately the door opened, although, apparently, no human agency had been at work to answer her summons.

Evelyn looked slightly startled, especially when, having advanced a little further, another door swung back in precisely the same manner as the first, and the two girls found themselves in a small room, whose curtainless window, set deep in the stone of which the castle was built, lent it rather a cheerless air. It was lined with books from floor to ceiling, and had also a small writing-table close to the window, which was strewn with papers. A door, across which was drawn a green baize curtain, led into a second room, and from this Nadir issued, clad in the loosely-fitting white garment and turban which he ordinarily wore.

"I welcome you," he said, in his soft, sibilant tones, putting his hand to his brow, and bowing low. "If you had sent me word beforehand that you intended honouring me with a visit I would have come down, and myself conducted you to my apartments."

"It was unnecessary to trouble you," returned Hilda, sweetly; "I hope, however, we do not disturb you in any way?"

"Disturb me, madam? No more than the fresh and gentle rains of summer disturb the parched earth on which they fall. Your smile is like a ray of sunshine on a winter day. Will you be seated?"

He motioned them to two chairs, but himself remained standing, his soft, melancholy eyes resting first on one, and then the other of the two girls.

"How is it we never see you?" asked Hilda.

"Do you never go out?"

"So rarely that I may say—never."

"I was hoping you would have visited me," continued the young girl, kindly. "It must surely be very lonely for you to be here by yourself day after day?"

He pointed to the bookshelves.

"I have companions in the mighty Dead, who speak to me from the Past."

"Yes, that is true; but books do not satisfy—they are not like human companionship."

"No," he said, and it almost seemed as if an accent of bitterness tinged the softness of his voice; "books do not deceive—beguile—betray, as men and women do."

"All men and women do not come within the sweep of your condemnation," replied Hilda, with a slightly reproachful glance.

"True, madam. I was speaking of that portion of humanity which is called 'the world.'"

There was a slight pause, broken by Evelyn.

"I thought you were a chymist," she said. He turned to her immediately.

"So I am. Would you like to see my laboratory—it hardly deserves the name of study."

The girls signified their assent, and he led the way into the next room.

It was a moderately sized square, stone apartment, a little larger than the one they had just quitted. In one corner was fixed a small crucible, or retort, and close by stood a tripod, on which was placed a chafing dish, containing some chemical substance that sent forth a steady though pale, blue flame. A large horsehoe was suspended overhead—apparently for magnetic purposes, and it lent a strange and eerie sort of look to the place, which was increased by maps and charts on the wall, covered with various cabalistic signs, and a large celestial globe which stood in front of the window. Against one wall was placed a cabinet with plate-glass doors, through which could be seen rows of bottles of various shapes and sizes, containing different coloured liquids.

Evelyn went about from one object to the other, full of the liveliest curiosity, until she came to the celestial globe.

"Does this tell you all about the stars?" she asked, with the simplicity of ignorance.

Nadir smiled.

"It does not tell you anything unless you already know something," he replied; "but it is very useful to an astronomer."

"An astronomer! That is different to an astrologer, isn't it?"

The Hindoo inclined his head in grave assent.

"What is the difference?"

"The astronomer studies the stars and their relations to the earth and each other; the astrologer studies them with a view to the influence they may exert on human destinies."

"And which of the two are you?" inquired Evelyn, with an appearance of interest.

"I am both."

"Then you believe that the stars do exert an influence on us?"

"I do."

"Can you tell fortunes by them?"

"I can cast a horoscope, if that is what you mean. Shall I cast yours?"

"Yes, I should like it very much," she exclaimed, eagerly. Then a strange shadow came across her face, and she drew back as if a sudden thought had struck her. "No; on consideration I would rather not have my fortune told."

"You are right—quite right," put in Hilda, who had listened to the conversation with some uneasiness. "I think it is impious to attempt to draw the veil from a future that Providence has seen fit to hide from our gaze."

"And yet," said Nadir, with an indescribable pathos, "if we did but know the dangers that threaten us we might guard against them."

"On that point we are not competent to judge."

But it was through no religious scruples that Evelyn had drawn back. The truth was that so many evil thoughts had been floating vaguely about in her mind; and she actually feared lest Nadir, by some occult means,

should discover them, and put them into words. She would not confess them even to herself, for all there was of good in her—and good exists even in the most depraved amongst us—revolting against what she knew to be basest ingratitude on her part.

"Do you make many practical experiments in chymistry?" asked Hilda, willing to turn the conversation.

"Yes; but you need not be afraid of my blowing up the Castle," returned Nadir, with his faint shadow of a smile. "The walls are calculated to resist much more violent explosions than I am likely to make."

"I was not thinking of that; but if you do not mind I should very much like to be present during some of your tests. I have always taken a great interest in chymistry, although I have had no opportunity of studying the subject."

Nadir hesitated a moment, glanced at her in rather a doubtful manner, then said,—

"I shall be pleased to give you lessons if you like."

"Will you? Oh! that is good. But will it not take up too much of your time?"

"No; I will spare you an hour a day."

Hilda was really grateful, for she had already resolved to take up some branch of study, and this was one in which she had always been vividly interested. She saw that Nadir had rather hesitated before making his proposal, but having once made it, he was really eager that it should be accepted.

"Would you like to join your cousin's studies?" pursued the Hindoo, addressing Evelyn.

She shook her head half doubtfully.

"I'm not clever enough, I'm afraid. Besides, it would take too much time, and my memory is not good enough. For example, how could I ever hope to learn the names and properties of the contents of these phials?" She waved her hand toward the inside of the cabinet, then opened the glass doors—which happened not to be locked—and took up a small bottle half full of a bright green liquid.

Nadir came hastily towards her, and took it from her.

"That is one of the most deadly essences that Science ever distilled," he said, replacing it, and locking the cabinet. "Three drops would be sufficient to kill the strongest man in the world, and, what is more, leave no traces to tell what has caused his death."

Evelyn grew very pale, as if frightened at what she had heard.

"It's a good thing the professional poisoner is not a scientist," she observed, laughing nervously.

"It is, indeed; I have often thought the same thing, for there are dozens of ways of compassing death, and yet leave no clue that natural causes had not been the acting agency."

CHAPTER XIII.

WESTLYNN CHURCH was rather a small, and not particularly handsome specimen of ecclesiastical architecture; but if it had been the most beautiful structure in Christendom, its rector, the Reverend Henry Field, could hardly have felt more pride in it. He was a short, plump, benign-looking man of about sixty, and a great favourite with the girls, whom he pressed into service for decorating the church at Christmas and harvest time.

Of course, he at once called on Miss Fitzherbert, and entreated her co-operation, which she promised very willingly, and in consequence we find her on Christmas Eve busily engaged in hanging up wreaths of ivy and holly, assisted by her cousin, and Ida St. John—who was introduced to her by the Rector, and to whom she at once took a great liking.

"I am so glad to know you," had said Ida, with the frankness natural to her. "I did not call upon you, because I have no chaperone, and papa goes nowhere."

"It is even pleasanter to make acquaintances

in an informal way," Hilda replied, "and I hope we shall be friends."

The three girls made a very pretty group as they bent over the evergreens, their bright young faces looking all the brighter by contrast with the dark furs in which they were wrapped. Ida, true to her love for brilliant colours, wore a crimson plush Tam O'Shanter, which suited her dark, piquante face to perfection.

"My dears," said the Rector, with his genial laugh, "you really make such a charming picture that it is a pity there is no one save myself to see you."

"Naughty Mr. Field!" exclaimed Ida, archly, holding up her finger. "You ought to know better than encourage vanity by flattering."

"I deny the imputation! I spoke the truth, and if the truth happened to be pleasant—why so much the better. It is not invariably the case."

The Rector laughed at his own joke, as he had a trick of doing, and before the echo of the laugh died away the church door opened, a head was put cautiously inside, as if to reconnoitre, and then, apparently satisfied with his survey, Lord Dering came in, followed by Verrall.

"Recruits!" exclaimed Mr. Field, going down the aisle to meet them. "I invoke your services in aid of the church, Lord Dering—yours also, Captain Verrall."

"We came for the purpose of offering them," returned the young man; but he did not think it worth while to add that it was the idea of seeing Ida that had induced him to leave the pheasants for the milder recreation of assisting in Christmas decorations.

She greeted him with her customary nonchalance when he came up to shake hands with her, and yet he was somehow aware of a subtle change in her manner—of a shade of embarrassment that had not been there before.

"Will you give me some work to do, Miss St. John?" he asked, coming back to her after he had spoken to the others.

"Certainly—with pleasure; but you must tell me first what your capacities are. It will not do for me to give you a task you are incompetent to perform."

"You need not fear," he rejoined, significantly, "for you may be sure that the fact of your setting me a task is sufficient to answer for its being done well."

"Really, Lord Dering, you are very vain! I am aware that it is a failing of your sex—at least of the younger members—but I did not know how far its limits extended."

"Well, try me, and see if I don't prove my words."

She obeyed his request, and then went on with her own garland, but half turned away from the Viscount, so as to be able to talk to Hilda, who was on the other side. By this manoeuvre Evelyn was enabled to occupy the attention of Verrall, with whom she kept up a lively and animated conversation.

"I am so looking forward to the dance next week," Hilda overheard her saying; "are not you?"

"I don't know that I am, particularly. Perhaps I am not as fond of dancing as you?"

"But you do dance?"

"Oh, yes," he responded, smiling, "at least I try my best, as I hope to be able to prove to you, if you will give me a dance."

"I will keep the first for you, if you like."

"Thank you."

By-and-by all the young people adjourned to the vestry, where an impromptu luncheon had been set, and a big fire was blazing; but they did not stay there long, for the few hours of daylight were too precious to be wasted, and so they worked on until the short December afternoon was merged in twilight obscurity.

"Do you confess, Mr. Field, that each young man and young woman has done his or her duty?" demanded Ida of the Rector, after the last green wreath had been twined about the pillars.

"I do, Miss St. John; if you like, I will go further and say that our thanks are especially due to you as being the guiding spirit."

"Going farther often means faring worse, so I shan't thank you for what you intended as a pretty speech," rejoined the young girl, saucily, as she drew on her fur-lined gloves.

"How are you going to get home?" inquired the Rector, who, it may be remarked, was one of her most devoted admirers.

"I will see Miss St. John home," interposed Arthur, eagerly.

"You will do nothing of the sort—thanks all the same. I have ordered the carriage for a quarter to four, and, if I mistake not, I hear the sound of the wheels at this moment."

Arthur looked, as he felt, disappointed, but he made the best of the situation, nevertheless.

"At least, you will let me put you into the carriage," he said, and she could not, without absolute rudeness, refuse so reasonable a request.

As they were walking down the churchyard the young man put his hand on her arm.

"Why are you so unkind to me, Ida? You must have known how great a pleasure it would have been to walk home with you."

"Really, Lord Dering, you are crediting me with a prophetic vision that I do not possess," she answered, shaking herself free from his touch. "How could I tell I should see you today?"

Arthur felt himself rather nonplussed by the question.

"You might have sent the carriage back, at any rate," he said, illogically.

"Oh, might I? That would have been an extremely absurd thing to do, in my opinion. Don't you think anybody with a grain of sense would prefer being snugly tucked up in a brougham, to trudging on foot through the mire and mist of a December evening?"

"You are utterly heartless!" exclaimed the young man, angrily.

"If 'heartless' is, in this instance, to be translated 'sensible,' I quite agree with you," was the composed reply.

Arthur bit his lip with vexation. All day long he had been looking forward to half-an-hour's quiet *tête-à-tête* with Ida—a *tête-à-tête* in which he intended coming to a full understanding with her, and asking her straightforwardly if she would be his wife. It certainly was rather annoying to have his plan knocked on the head like this.

"I wonder if you *mean* to torment me, or if your conduct is merely the result of caprice," he muttered, in a low tone.

"Neither the one nor the other."

"Then why won't you give me the chance of speaking to you alone for a few minutes?"

"Because," said Ida, very steadily, and coming to a pause just by the churchyard gates, so that she could look straight up into his eyes, "there can be no possible reason why you should want to speak to me in private. Any words that I should wish to hear from you I should be quite willing for all the world to listen to."

Arthur returned her gaze for a moment, then he said, in rather an unsteady voice,—

"Do you really mean that, Ida?"

"I really mean it."

There was a pause, during which each continued looking at the other. Ida was the first to remove her gaze. She laughed rather nervously as she drew down her veil.

"It is cold standing here—I think I will say 'good-night.'"

"Good-night, Miss St. John."

She extended her hand, but he either did not, or would not see it. He bowed low as she stepped into the carriage, and turned away immediately, retracing his steps towards the church.

"That must be final," he muttered to himself, his head sinking on his breast. "It would be unmanly to persecute her after such a plain avowal of her wishes, and it is pretty clear she does not care for me—never has cared for me, most likely, but lured me on from some

spirit of coquetry that the Devil himself must have planted in her heart. Well, it is a disappointment—a pretty severe one; but I suppose I shall get over it some day.”

The latter reflection did not bring him any great amount of consolation. “Some day” is at best very vague and shadowy, while his soreness of heart was a present reality, which forced itself upon him in a manner the very reverse of vague.

Viscount Dering was a brave man; he had stood the fire of the enemy's bullets, he had led his men forward in the thickest of the fight, and he had not known what fear meant; but it must be confessed that he was not courageous enough to face the prospect of losing the girl he loved; and to prevent himself from dwelling upon it, he went up to Evelyn (who chanced to be nearest to him when he went inside the church) and began a playful railway that somewhat surprised her.

The Castle was a very short distance from the church, so short that to have driven would have been absurd, so the two young men accompanied Hilda and her cousin home, and it was owing to Arthur having taken possession of Evelyn that Verrall found himself by the side of our heroine.

It was a misty evening, and dark, although the clock had only just struck four. A damp rawness pervaded the atmosphere, the trees were dripping with moisture, and the earth was soft and muddy; altogether it was about as uncomfortable as could well be imagined, and people who were wise stayed indoors by the cosy fireside, pitying such wayfarers as chanced to be abroad. Under these circumstances, Verrall ventured to offer the heiress his arm.

“It is so dark you might stumble and hurt yourself,” he said, half in apology.

Hilda thanked him, and availed herself of the proffered assistance, not without a blush, which the kindly darkness hid.

For a few minutes neither spoke; then Hilda, who found the silence embarrassing, said,—

“How long are you going to remain in this part of the world, Captain Verrall?”

“For another week, I believe.”

“And then do you rejoin your regiment?”

“Yes, or at least I believe so. Lady Hawkeley has been kind enough to interest herself in my welfare, and is using her influence to obtain me an important appointment in India. I don't know whether she will succeed.”

“In India!” repeated the girl, her voice faltering ever so little. “That is a long way off.”

“The other end of the world is hardly to be considered far in these days of rapid locomotion,” rejoined Verrall, smilingly.

“Still you will be a good way from your friends.”

“My friends!” echoed the officer, in a tone of melancholy. “I fear I can hardly use the word in its plural signification, for I know no one to whom I can apply it save Dering. It is true I have a great many acquaintances, but that is a different thing.”

“Shall I say relatives then, instead of friends?” pursued Hilda.

He shook his head.

“My mother is the only relative I possess, to my knowledge at least. I suppose, like most other people, I have cousins of different degrees, but I have never seen any of them.”

“At any rate, your mother will grieve.”

“I am not quiet sure that you are right, Miss Fitzherbert. She has a very philosophical temperament, and will tell herself it is for my good, and therefore not a legitimate cause for vexation. She is no fine lady,” he continued, after a slight pause, “but a working woman, accustomed from her youth to earning her own living, and with neither time nor taste for sentiment.”

The young man spoke with a certain pride, as if he were really anxious to proclaim the humility of his origin, and his appreciation of his mother's character. Nevertheless, Hilda

instinctively felt that a note of bitterness rang in his voice, of which he himself was not aware.

“Your mother must be very proud of the name you have made for yourself!” she said, very softly.

“I believe she is, although I have simply done my duty, and have received rewards which I never dared hope to expect.”

“Few of us could say so much.”

“Still,” he added, as if pursuing a line of thought that had awoke in his mind, “it seems to me that men who have descended from a long line of famous ancestors have a greater incentive to perform deeds of valour than those who have only to carve out a name for themselves. There is something grand in striving to keep up the renown of one's family.”

“There is something grander in doing one's duty for duty's sake,” responded Hilda, “my heroes were always self-made men.”

She could almost feel the electric thrill of pleasure that ran through his veins at her words. They had been uttered in all simplicity, and with no ulterior meaning, but they were more than sweet to the man to whom they were addressed.

By this time they had arrived at the great oaken doors of the Castle, which were thrown open, and disclosed the brilliantly lighted hall, where two or three footmen in the Fitzherbert livery and with powdered hair were standing about. A curious pang went through Verrall's heart as he saw them. While he and Hilda had been walking together under the broad sky, and with only the boundaries of field and stream about them, the barrier separating them had not been visible; but here in this splendid castle, with its retinue of servants, and its evidences of a wealth almost unbounded, he was very keenly reminded of the difference between them—he a soldier of fortune with only his sword to depend upon, she an heiress, who might mate with the noblest and richest in the land.

“You will come in and let me give you some tea?” Hilda said, pausing on the threshold, and addressing herself to both young men.

Verrall hesitated, but Lord Dering did not leave him the initiative of refusing.

“We shall be most grateful,” he replied, and followed her in.

“I am not going to treat you formally,” observed the young girl, leading the way to her boudoir, which had been furnished in accordance with her own wishes, and presented a charming little picture as they entered.

Terra cotta and sage green were the prevailing tints in the upholstery, but they were brightened by gleams of gold, and softened by cream lace draperies. The walls were coloured and painted in frescoes, the panels of the door and the ceiling being also painted. A bright, clear fire of cherry wood burnt in the polished steel grate, its aromatic odour struggling with the more delicate perfume of violets and narcissus which were grouped together in a crystal bowl on one of the side brackets.

Tea was already set on a small Sutherland table, and the gleams of the fire reflected themselves in the silver service. For the rest, the room was lighted by two or three ruby lamps with pink shades that softened their radiance.

“What a pretty interior!” remarked Arthur, subsiding into the puffiest and most comfortable of the arm-chairs, as soon as Hilda had thrown off her wraps and seated herself in front of the tea equipage. “If I were a painter I would paint it, and I am sure it would obtain a place on the line at Burlington House.”

Hilda smiled, well pleased at the compliment, for it had been a task of real pleasure to her, fitting up the boudoir according to her own fancy. The other rooms of the Castle were grand and spacious, but this was cosy and homelike, besides having the advantage of

opening into a conservatory, where azaleas and camellias were now showing great banks of most lovely blossom.

After all, Verrall was very glad he had let Arthur decide for him, for assuredly that cosy little tea was one of the happiest hours he had ever spent.

Hilda was rather brighter and livelier than usual, and looked her best as she daintily poured out her orange Pekoe, and handed the cup with her own white, jewelled fingers, to the young officer.

A species of subtle intoxication stole over the soldier, born partly of the presence of Hilda, but added to by the violet scented warmth, and the fact of his own departure being not far distant.

Why should he not enjoy the present, and let the future take care of itself? Pain might come—nay, must come—but was that not a reason the more why he should hold these passing moments, and enjoy to the full the utmost delight they were capable of imparting?

Never had he been so bright and insouciant before. Never had his laugh been so hearty, his remarks so full of wit. Arthur stared at him in astonishment.

“I think you must be what the Scotch call ‘fey,’ Verrall,” he observed.

“Oh, I hope not!” exclaimed Hilda.

“Being ‘fey’ means being in extra good spirits just before something very sad is about to happen, does it not?” turning to Arthur.

“Something of the kind.”

“I hope your ‘fey-ness’ won't have such a termination.”

“It is extremely probable, but ‘sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,’ and I am not going to torment myself with the future,” returned Eric, as he rose to place his cup and saucer on the table. “May I take a peep at your conservatory?” he added. “It looks so tempting from afar that I am anxious to have a closer inspection.”

“Certainly,” answered the young girl, and without thinking she went to the glass door, and drew aside the plush curtain that partially shrouded it. “I will point out to you a very wonderful fern that the head-gardener brought in this morning, telling me a long history of where it came from, and how few there were like it in England.”

Whatever might be deemed coquettish in the heiress's action was divested of any such significance by the entire simplicity of her manner, and the most rigid of chaperons could not have found fault with it.

The fern she spoke of was at the other end of the conservatory, and after it had been duly examined and admired Hilda pulled a blossom from an azalea, and trifled with it in some slight embarrassment, her eyes meanwhile fixed on the tessellated tiles at her feet.

Eric did not break the silence; indeed, he wished it could have lasted indefinitely, for it was quite enough for him that she stood near, her fair beauty looking fairer than ever, with the background of blossom, and the big palm-ferns spreading their graceful fronds above her head.

She might have been the goddess of flowers; in fact, Eric very much doubted whether Flora could have been half so beautiful.

“Captain Verrall,” she said, at last, lifting her lovely, bashful eyes, “you said something just now that grieved me.”

“Did I? Then, indeed, it was inadvertently, for, believe me, I would not grieve you for any bribe the world could offer me,” he exclaimed, with earnest warmth, that sufficiently vouched for the truth of his words.

“I do believe you,” smiling; “but all the same, I must remind you of what you said. It was, that you had only one friend in the world.”

“Well?” as she paused.

“Well, you are wrong, for besides Lord Dering you have me. I hope,” she added, a rosy warmth coming in her cheeks, “I hope you won't think I am overstepping the limits that are prescribed for girls in saying this to

you. I am afraid I am unconventional at the best of times, and I have never yet sacrificed truth to etiquette, and trust I never shall do so. It seems to me that friendship may exist between a man and a woman just as well as between two people of the same sex, and I want to offer mine to you if you will have it."

As she finished speaking she came a step nearer to him, and held out her hand, her lips slightly tremulous, but her eyes luminous and steady.

As if it had been the hand of a queen, Verrall raised it to his lips.

"I accept your offer, Miss Fitzherbert, in the same spirit in which it is made, and I am deeply grateful to you. I agree with you that there is no possible reason why a man and a woman should not be friends; it is only a cramping conventionality that forbids it."

"A cramping conventionality!" All very well in theory, Captain Eric Verrall, but practice has proved the fallacy of your reasoning over and over again. It may be possible for old or middle-aged men and women to nourish a platonic friendship for each other, but a youth and maiden—never!

"And," continued Hilda, her voice insensibly falling into a lower key, "when you are abroad you will remember there is someone in England who thinks of you, and prays for your welfare."

Eric turned away sharply, and put his hand to his lip with an involuntary gesture, as if he would stem the torrent of wild words that rose to them. Human endurance has its limits after all, and although the young officer's feelings were pretty well under command, he knew they could not much longer stand the test to which they were now being subjected.

Hilda was so near—her hand still lay in his—he could almost feel her breath on his cheek, for in her eager simplicity she had bent slightly forward, and looked straight up at him, with her lovely child-like eyes full of sympathy. Her beauty was maddening, and Verrall, as he gazed on it, thought of Lancelot and Guinevere:—

"She looked so lovely, as she swayed
The rein with dainty finger tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss,
Upon her perfect lips."

A moment more, and becoming conscious that she would think his conduct strange, he recovered his self-possession.

"I do not know what I have done to deserve your great kindness," he murmured, incoherently.

"Did you not save my life?" she retorted. "It is I who should be grateful, not you."

"We will not speak of that; but before I go, will you grant me a favour?"

"Anything that is in my power."
"Then give me a flower that I may keep in memory of—my friend."

She looked round instantly, prepared to comply with his request, in which she saw nothing at all singular or out of the common.

It must be remembered that she had lived, until quite recently, in the very heart of the country, that she had not been out much, and knew absolutely nothing of lovers or love affairs. She had read few novels, and Tennyson was about the only poet with whose works she could be said to be intimately acquainted; thus it followed that she attached no meaning to words and actions that would have been significant enough to most girls of her age.

She glanced at the azaleas, and camellias, and geraniums by which she was surrounded, then shook her head, as if recognizing their unsuitability. Suddenly her eyes rested on a shallow pot of violets set in amongst the other plants, and she gathered half-a-dozen.

"There!" she said, giving them to him; "will those do, or are they too humble for your acceptance?"

Eric did not reply in words, but as he took the flowers from her their eyes met, and it was impossible for any girl, however simple-

minded, to mistake the expression that was in them.

His words he could control, but his face betrayed his secret.

Hilda grew very pale, and involuntarily drew back, trembling a little as one who is overwhelmed by the suddenness of a great discovery; but she did not attempt to go away, and it is impossible to say what madness Eric might have been guilty of had they not both been recalled to reason by the voice of Evelyn.

"What are you good people doing all this long while?" she demanded, coming forward and speaking carelessly, but eyeing them very attentively, nevertheless. "I am sure you have had sufficient time to classify every specimen of horticulture in the conservatory."

"Have we?" asked Hilda, recovering herself, and half turning away, so that her cousin should not see her face—which she knew was covered with tell-tale blushes. "That is rather a sweeping assertion, Evelyn—too sweeping to be supported. However, we will return to the boudoir now, and apologise for our absence."

Lord Dering, upon whom a fit restlessness had fallen, was anxious to go; so the two young men said adieu, and departed, and it would be most difficult to say which of the two was the more silent on the way home!

(To be continued.)

BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

CHAPTER I.

A young girl lay on the brink of a rushing river, watching it as it hurried on; on, never turning, never pausing, but going on, on in its swift course to the deep blue sea.

The golden sunbeams quivered down through the leaves, sparkling on the snow-tipped waves, which danced and gurgled round the roots of the graceful willow trees, that, leaning over from the bank, seemed to try to find a smooth spot, that would mirror back their green outlines.

The soft wind, laden with the fragrance of the new-mown hay, kissed the waters with amorous touch, as though asking them to stay their hurried course, to stay and be wooed. From the calm depths of the fathomless sky, flecked here and there with silver cloudlets, poured down the radiant brilliance of summer lighting up the restless waters as they tossed to and fro, coquetting with the lilies floating on their surface for a brief second, and then speeding on; on, over all obstacles, till, at last, with a joyful plunge, they joined the mighty ocean.

And the girl, with white arms pillowing her fair head, watched the river with eyes that were earnest and somewhat sad.

The sunbeams played on her face, woke a sparkle in the deep azure eyes, fringed with long lashes, and overarched by brows nearly black, lit up the amber-coloured hair, kissed the rosy lips, and rippled over the graceful head.

The glamour of the summertime was on her, a drowsy spell was stealing across her brain, the wooing winds suggested peace, rest, slumber; it was the time, the hour for dreaming—dreaming of all things lovely, harmonious, pleasant, and shutting out all things that jarred, or were unpleasant, and she gave herself up to the enjoyment of beautiful, but idle and baseless visions.

The head sank farther back, the fringed lids closed, shutting out the sparkle from the azure eyes; the lips parted—she slept. And while she slept, the river swept on its busy way; the birds carolled their love-songs through the trees; the bees roved, humming about the tufts of flowers; the sun trod his path through the heavens, the butterflies flew by; all the world seemed busy, save the beautiful dreamer.

And beautiful she was, so beautiful that Paul Chicherly, though he had seen her scores of times, and knew every feature of the perfect face by heart, stood spellbound, as he stepped out of the wood and saw her lying under the giant oak, held by the charm of her rare loveliness.

"Is it possible?" he asked himself, as he gazed at her, "that she is mine? That some day she will be my wife—my own?—or is the happiness I seek too great for me to obtain? Shall I lose her? Pshaw!" he added contemptuously. "What can part us? I have the first love of her heart, and she is true as steel; she is mine now and always. Nothing can part us, nothing, nothing!" and he flung himself down on his knees at her side, and, shutting out the intruding sunbeam, kissed her lips himself, with all a lover's impassioned ardour.

With a start the sleeper woke, and looked up with dazzled eyes, exclaiming half fearfully,—

"Who is it?"

"Some one to whom you belong," responded the young man. And with a glad "You, Paul!" the white arms crept round his neck, and the soft cheek was laid against his own.

"Yes, Paul. Are you glad to see me, sweetheart?"

"Yes. I thought you would not be able to come to-day."

"So did I. But I managed to escape for a brief time."

"Then you must go back soon?" she asked disconsolately.

"Yes," he assented.

"I wish business matters were not of so much importance," she sighed.

"So do I," and he sighed also; "yet they are, and must be attended to."

"Of course."

"And in this case the business is of vital importance."

"Have—have—you arranged matters?" she faltered, with quivering lips.

"Very nearly," he answered with another sigh, heavier and deeper than the last.

"And—which of them—will—will—be the possessor of—Temple Dane?" The last words seemed to almost choke her.

"The American."

"Mr. Spragg."

He nodded an assent.

"What is he like? Is he nice?"

"No, I don't think he is particularly 'nice.' He 'guesses,' and 'calculates' a little too much to suit my taste, and has other habits which are not prepossessing."

"He won't prove a pleasant neighbour, then?"

"Hardly."

"And what is he like?" she persisted curiously, a queer feeling of interest in the stranger which she was wholly unable to account for urging her to ask.

"Like," repeated her companion, "why one of Cheop's mummies."

"Oh! Paul!" ejaculated the girl.

"He is really."

"In what way?"

"In every way."

"Is he swathed in Eastern garments?"

"No."

"Does he wear anklets and bracelets of tawny gold?"

"No."

"Is his chest stove in and full of precious jewels?"

"My dear child, no."

"In what way, then, does he resemble a mummy?"

"In the way of his skin, and which is dried, and parchment like, and utterly mummy-like altogether."

"How horrible!"

"Yes, horrible is the right word to describe this man's appearance. He is brown, and lantern-jawed, with dark, sunken eyes, that tremble fiercely, yet with a certain dulness from under bushy black brows. Wrinkles are everywhere in the strange face, where

wrinkles can form; his teeth are large, and projecting, and have a truly carnivorous look, as though they would gnaw and nibble at anything, while the upper lip, being absurdly short, fully reveals them, and gives a ghastly sort of grinning expression to the features."

"Why doesn't he wear a moustache?"

"I hardly know, Opal, except that Americans of his type seldom do, and are generally clean shaven."

"What is his type?"

"The money-making one."

"Oh! so commonplace."

"Yes. Did you think the mummy would do something out of the common?"

"I did. His occupation ought to be uncommon to match his face, which from your description must be unique."

"It is, and I never wish to look at another like it."

"I should imagine not. He is immensely wealthy, isn't he?"

"Fabulously so, I believe."

"And how did he make it? What is he, or was he?"

"A dry goods' man."

"A what?"

"A dry goods' man," repeated Paul, gravely feeling very much inclined to laugh at the bewildered expression on his companion's face.

"What may that be? Will you tell me, please, and lighten my dulness?"

"Certainly, my love. A dry goods' man is one who buys and sells calicoes, laces, linens, silks, gloves, umbrellas, velvets, damasks, hairpins, carpets, chairs, &c., &c."

"Oh! a shopkeeper," she said disdainfully.

"If you wish to call him so; yet a shopkeeper in whose shoes many a blue-blooded and penniless aristocrat would be only too glad to stand."

"Nonsense, Paul."

"It is no nonsense, dear child. This man's dry goods' store was one of the largest retail places in America, and one of the sights of New York. It was ten stories high, covered a large space of ground, and with its magnificence of iron, brass, marble, and glass, looked more like a ducal palace than a place for the sale of feminine frippery and frivolities. His employes formed a small army! He had branches all over the United States, and his signature was honoured by every banker, from Boston to San Francisco. He entertained right royally, and was visited by persons of rank."

"Still he is only a shopman," she repeated coldly.

"A shopman, and possessed of enormous personality. Marble palaces, hotels, stores, opera houses, theatres, warehouses, churches, bonds, stocks, shares, everything that constitutes riches, a palatial mansion in Boston, in which is gathered a choice collection of pictures, bronzes, marbles, and curiosities."

"If he has all these things in the New World, what does he want to come in the old one for?"

"To buy ancestors, my dear! They are sometimes hard to get in America. Old pictures, old houses, old servants are plentiful here, he wants these things and—"

"And," she interrupted quickly, "he is going to buy yours."

"Opal," he said, bending his blue eyes on her full of tender reproach.

"Forgive me," she cried, impulsively throwing her arms again around his throat, "forgive me, I did not mean to wound you. But it makes me wild to think that this man, with his horrible face and ill-gotten wealth, should rob you of the home you love so dearly."

"He does not rob me, darling," he said, in a low, pained voice. "It was another did that. He gives more than a fair price for Temple Dene, more than we expected to get, and which will pay to the uttermost farming my unfortunate father's debts, and leave me free from that burden."

"And nothing more, Paul?" she queried, with fond anxiety.

"Nothing more, love," he rejoined with a sigh.

"How unfair! how cruel to you it all is!" she burst out.

"Nay," he replied, caressing the sunny head that leant so confidently against his shoulder. "My lot is not harder to bear than that of thousands of other men. Very few are born to anything, and almost all have to toil at some time or other in their lives. Very few can be basking in the sunshine with open mouth waiting for the ripe plums to fall in, having not even to stretch out their hands to take the dainties."

"That should be your lot by right."

"True. Still I may be happier as I am now. I have my profession," and the young sailor lifted his head proudly.

"That takes you from me," whispered the girl at his side.

"True," he said again, as he pressed her to his breast, and his head drooped a little, and the light of enthusiasm faded from his sunny eyes; "but for that I should love it dearly. Nay, I do love it. I like to tread the deck, and feel the ship ploughing through the bounding waves, and the salt breeze blowing on my brow, the boundless ocean all around, the fathomless sky above, and not a craft in sight."

"It is more to you than I am," she murmured, with a slight accession of jealousy.

"No, my beloved," he returned, with tender gravity; "you are more to me than anything else in the whole world—my first, my best, my dearest."

"Ah! Paul, you do love me?"

"As my life," he answered, looking into the azure orbs looking into his.

"Nothing can part us, can it?" she queried.

"Nothing, save death," he answered confidently.

"That need not part us," she said quickly.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you are only six years older than I am; men are stronger than women. Most likely we shall die together, lie in the same coffin, side by side, your arms round me, be put under the cold sod at the same time. I shall be content to die when you do, Paul."

"Don't count upon doing that, dearest," he responded. "In the dance of death the ghastly master of the ceremonies seldom studies the selection of coeval partners for his grim measure. I may die before you."

"Yes, I know, and when you are on a cruise I shiver when I hear the wind moan and play round the gables of the house, and pray Heaven you may be safe and sound, and come back to me as you left."

"Little coward," he jested, to reassure her, for she was white and trembling. "This will never do for a sailor's wife. You must learn to be brave and fearless, to hear the wind howl and the tempest rage, without a single quiver."

"That I shall never do," she said, with a shake of the head, "while you are afloat. You are too much to me, too dear, to allow of my being easy while you are in danger."

"Then—you do care for me a little?" he remarked.

"A little, Paul?" she ejaculated, reproachfully.

"Well a great deal, then, eh?"

"Yes, a very, very great deal."

"And will it always be so?"

"You surely don't doubt me, Paul?"

"Not you, dearest, but others."

"What others? And how can anyone else interfere between you and me?"

"Your father," he said, hesitatingly.

"He has promised me to you—given his consent; surely he will not now withdraw it?" she demanded, with anxious eagerness.

"No, not exactly withdraw it; but—I sail for a three years' cruise at least this autumn. When I am gone he—he—may—persuade you

to—look with favourable eyes upon another suitor."

"He could never do that, Paul. My heart is yours now and always. I shall never alter."

"Are you sure, Opal?"

"Quite sure. You are my first love, you will be my last."

"Nothing would induce you to give me up and wed another?" he continued, with singular pertinacity, for one look into her soft eyes ought to have satisfied him, they were so full of affection and tenderness.

"Nothing."

"Think well. Is there no power that would move you to be false to me?"

"None. Your love is a talisman; while I possess it I care for no other man's."

"And if you lost it, or thought you lost it?" he continued, his eyes fixed intently on her face.

"Thought you—did not love me, Paul? Oh, I could not think that—that would be the end of the world for me. I should have nothing left to live for."

"And you would not care what became of you?"

"No. Life would hold no interest for me."

"And you would then do exactly what your father told you?"

"Yes; all things would be alike to me, if I did not possess your love. A palace, or a prison, a desert, or a grove of luxuriant flowers, heat or cold, rain or fine weather, I should not distinguish what was good and what bad. Happiness, life to all intents and purposes, would be dead within me."

"Then promise me you will never believe that it is not yours, no matter what proof you have to the contrary. Promise me you will always believe in me?"

"I promise," she said, placing her hands in his.

"Why do you want this promise," she asked, a moment later.

"Lovers always want promises," he replied, evasively, for he could not tell her that her beauty would win much admiration, and that he feared her shallow, selfish father would sacrifice her to some wealthy suitor during his absence, to secure his own comfort.

"I haven't asked you to make any."

"No; yet I'll make them if you wish."

"What shall I make you promise?"

"That I'll come back here as early as possible to-morrow."

"Must you go, then, now?" she asked, sorrowfully.

"Yes, my dear one, the mummy awaits me."

"That horrible man? I could almost hate him."

"Why? His money is useful to me."

"He takes you from me."

"Only for a short time, and that does not matter. If he were to take you from me it would be another thing," and with a last kiss Paul Chichester turned reluctantly away, and retraced his steps to Temple Dene.

CHAPTER II.

MANY a true word is said in jest, and the young man little thought, when he spoke of what the coming years would bring him, what share of sorrow or joy, what wealth or poverty, what disappointment, or what gratification. If he got his just share his future ought to be all sunshine, and be blessed with wealth and every happiness, for his youth and early manhood had been hard enough.

He was the only son of Fishlake Chichester, one of the handsomest and most extravagant men of his time. He had squandered his mother's fortune, and then his wife's, and finally played ducks and drakes with the inheritance of his only child, whom he had put in the Royal Navy at eleven, in order that he might be out of his way, and ask no inconvenient questions as to why the timber was felled with no sparing hand, and the salmon-fishing in the Dene river let to strangers, and

the game shot in the autumn sent up to the London market, and the horses sold, the carriages put down, some of the old, tried and faithful servants dismissed after many years of service, and other strange innovations made, which the bright boy would have noticed and commented upon in a way that would have proved irksome and irritating to the dissipated father, who turned night into day, held disreputable orgies in the small hours, dicing, and drinking, and swearing with dissolute companions, losing large sums of money to the gamblers with whom he associated, robbing his son, defrauding his own flesh and blood in his mad career, his insane passion for gaming.

At times, when Paul was home on leave, he saw things which made his young heart heavy, but which he scarcely understood, and which he had not time to investigate, for his father urged him to spend most of the days and the nights too at the Rest, where lived Mr. Vane, an old school-fellow of Fishlake Chicherly; and as Paul's inclinations drew him thither to sport and play with Opal and Ruby Vane, and their four little twin brothers, he was nothing loth to leave Temple Dene and its riotous company, and find peace and pleasure under the thatched roof of the Rest, whose impoverished and crochety master welcomed him and the presents of fruit and game he invariably brought warmly, for he saw in the boy the future possessor of a fine estate, and reasoned that Opal, the pretty child of six with whom he played Blind Man's Buff, Tom Tiddler's Ground, and other infantile games, would one day be a charming girl, and well fitted for such a position as that of mistress of Temple Dene.

So he encouraged the intimacy, and the affection that existed between the children; and later on, when Paul was twenty, and asked his consent to an engagement with his eldest daughter, he gave it readily, though she was but fourteen at the time, for he thought it would not do to refuse such an offer, as in their retired village she was not likely ever to meet with a better.

So Paul Chicherly and Opal Vane became affianced lovers, and a few days after the ratification of the engagement he sailed with his ship without having seen his father, who was dissipating in London, and thinking of anything and everything save his son.

On his return from abroad a year later, the first thing he did was to seek the consent of his model parent. He had not written to obtain it, knowing full well the uselessness of such a course.

Mr. Chicherly never by any chance opened or read a letter. He flung them all indiscriminately into the fire, and this doubtless saved himself an immense amount of trouble, as his correspondents consisted chiefly of Jew money-lenders, cast off mistresses, and dunning tradespeople.

"Can I say a word to you, father?" he asked, the evening after his return, as when dinner was finished they sat at wine, toying with costly peaches and hot-house grapes, the finest Covent Garden could produce. Chicherly always having the best of everything, which he protested was the right thing to do, as he never paid for anything, from the Sillery and Johannesberg he drank, down to the brushes which blacked his boots.

"A hundred, if you like, my boy," he answered, in the usual airy manner he adopted towards the son he had so deeply injured.

"I won't keep you long; but—the few words I want to say must be said in private," and he glanced at the two ladies who graced or disgraced the table with their presence.

"Rosalie and Belle don't matter. They are in all my secrets, and never babble as most women do."

"Doubtless they are models of caution in that respect," rejoined Paul, sarcastically, for it stung him to the quick to see such women, with tattered reputations, bold manners, and brazen faces occupying the place which had been his mother's—that dear mother whose

fair angel face seemed even now to smile down on him in his dreams from the heavens where she had gone from the earthly home that had been so uncongenial to her gentle spirit; "still, what I have to say is for your ear alone, therefore if you, will not hear it now, I will wait for you in the library later on."

"No, I will hear it now," rejoined his father, knowing how quietly determined the young man was, and how useless it would be for him to try and escape the ordeal of listening. "My loves," to the ladies with the very pink faces, very black brows, and very sunny hair, "do you mind retiring? I will join you presently in the drawing-room, and we will after retire to the turret chamber and try a little of this to see which way the luck lies," and he shook his hand as though rattling a dice box.

"Now," he continued, as they withdrew, "what is it you want to say that my Dulcinea musn't hear?"

"I want to speak to you of my marriage."

"Your what?" ejaculated Chicherly, staring at him with palpable astonishment, quite different to the languid manner he generally adopted.

"My marriage," repeated the young man quietly. "Has it never occurred to you that I should marry—some day?"

"Yes—no," replied the other, hurriedly, in evident confusion. "Not yet. You are so young."

"I came of age last month."

"Impossible. You are not more than nineteen at most."

"The certificate of my birth makes me out twenty-one last May."

"Is it possible? How time flies! It seems only yesterday that you were an infant."

"A good many yesterdays ago since that interesting time. I am a man now, with a man's wishes and desires, and—"

"And one of these desires," interrupted his father, "is marriage?"

"Exactly so."

"And who is the lady you have honoured with your choice?"

"Opal Vane."

"What, Copeland Vane's pretty daughter?"

"Yes."

"Ha! ha! ha! Fancy you going in for old Cope's lamb; you won't get much of a dowry with her, only her undeniable beauty."

"I don't want a dowry," replied the young man, proudly. "I have enough for both."

"Enough for both," repeated the other vaguely, his bleared, bloodshot eyes fixed on the fair frank face before him; "enough for both! Ah, yes, of course. You are the catch of the county, the future master of Temple Dene, and it comes to you absolutely. I have only a life interest in it. That makes a difference, doesn't it?"

"I suppose so," replied Paul coldly; he did not relish the insinuation.

"And—and—when are you going to be married?" continued his father, with an uneasy glance at him, for he foresaw that many unpleasant discoveries would be made, many hidden things come to light, when the lawyers began to pry about and prepare the marriage settlements.

"Not for some time (Fishlake breathed freer). She is so young, not sixteen yet, and I don't expect to get rapidly promoted. That will not matter, however," he continued, "as I shall leave the service when I marry. Opal is nervous and unhappy when I am away, so I shall settle down quietly."

"Here?" asked his father, in evident alarm.

"No, not here," rejoined Paul with emphasis. "I could hardly bring my wife here."

"Of course not, of course not," agreed the other quickly. "During my lifetime we could find a pretty cage for you to bring your bird to in the neighbourhood."

"Yes."

"Is there anything more you want to say?"

asked Chicherly, draining a bumper of neat brandy as he spoke, and glancing at the clock.

"Only to ask your consent to my engagement. Have I it?"

"Have you it? Why, certainly you have, my boy. My consent to a dozen engagements. There's nothing in world like matrimony for a man of your type. You will settle down into commonplace beatitude, and be the father of a brood of little chicks in less than no time. I wish you joy. Ha! ha!" and with a shout of laughter Chicherly left the room, and proceeded to the turret chamber, where with one or two boon companions, and his brace of painted ladies, he passed the night in dicing and drinking, and wild revelry of all sorts; and left the young man staring moodily at the fire, which glowed in the wide grate—despite that it was the merry month of June—and wondering why fate had given him such a father, a man whom he could neither respect nor like; who scoffed at all that was pure and holy, and gave himself up, body and soul, to evil courses, to debauchery and excess, without one thought to his future or that of others.

That was the last time father and son met this side of the silent river. The next morning, when Chicherly's valet, after searching all the inhabited rooms, at last bent his steps to the quaint turret chamber, he found his master lying face downwards in a *châlis* of broken bottles, decanters, tumblers, packs of cards, dice-boxes, and cigars, stone dead, with empurpled face, and protruding eyes, the blood oozing from his ears and nostrils.

The country doctor called in said it was apoplexy induced by his intemperate habits, and the coroner's jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical testimony—a verdict which satisfied all the world save one person, and that one was Paul.

Through the mind of Paul Chicherly ran a dark suspicion of foul play. His father's companions on the last night of his existence had been of the lowest order—men who had made their fortunes in the gold diggings of California, while the two women were the dregs of the London *demi-monde*. They had fled carrying with them all the portable valuables they could lay their thievish hands on, leaving no trace behind, along with the men.

Detectives were privately employed, and every means taken to trace them, but in vain. They seemed to have got clean away, probably to some foreign country; and Paul was obliged to lock up his suspicions in his own breast, and to sail with the reserve squadron for a few months. On his return he began to investigate affairs with the family lawyer, and try to reduce the chaotic confusion which reigned into something like order.

He obtained a year's leave of absence, and set diligently to work. After six months he gathered in a vast number of debts, contracted by his father. Debts of honour (*sic*), debts to tradesmen, debts to ladies, jewellers, hotel-keepers, tailors, livery men, a formidable array, and one which he saw he could never pay unless he sold his dearly-loved home, put Temple Dene up to the auctioneer's hammer.

It was a cruel day for the young man when he learned he must part with his inheritance to satisfy his father's greedy and rapacious creditors. Yet he was a man of honour; his father's name must be cleared, his recklessly accumulated debts paid.

(To be continued.)

"It was the policy of the good old gentleman to make his children feel that home was the happiest place in the world; and this delicious home feeling is one of the choicest gifts a parent can bestow."

True is a stream in which there is no mooring the barques of life, because there is no casting anchor in it; is in the true Letha, in which is engulfed the recollections of our sorrows.

GLADYS LEIGH.

CHAPTER III.

GLADYS LEIGH did not often go by train; railway tickets require ready money, and that, as you have doubtless gathered, was very rare at Arle Priory. Sir Hubert had not been beyond his own grounds for years.

Joan and Anthony performed all their journeys on foot, so it was not altogether strange that the household at the Priory should make a mistake regarding the arrival of the afternoon train from London at Mashing.

Joan told her young lady it got in at four; and Gladys who knew, by report, the speed of the Mashing flys, calculated her unwelcome visitor could not possibly arrive before five. In reality, the trains had been altered, and Lord Carew—otherwise James Lorraine—alighted on the rural platform a good hour before, according to Joan's information, he ought to have done.

Three o'clock on a July afternoon, The sky a lovely, cloudless blue—the air soft and balmy—just a sprinkling of people giving a lively appearance to the railway station—no bustle, no confusion—a kind of joyous tranquillity pervaded everything, and beyond lay the rippling waters of the English Channel, dotted about by many a white sail.

Royal Carew had travelled all over Europe, but he had never seen a place which impressed him so favourably as Mashing. He shouldered his light valise, and began to wonder how he should reach his destination.

He felt pretty certain the Priory did not keep a carriage, and that Sir Hubert should trouble about his lawyer's comfort never once occurred to him.

"Fly, sir—fly!"

Royal looked up. He had reached a long file of open flys, all intent on securing passengers. A very shabby omnibus also competed for public favour, its conductor proclaiming, in stentorian tones,—

"Drop you anywhere in the town for sixpence."

Lord Carew turned away from this enticing offer, and addressed a respectable man, who appeared to be the proprietor of the only fly boasting two horses in the line.

"Can you tell me how far it is to Arle?"

"Seven miles good. Drive ye there and back for ten shillings, sir!"

Carew was not in the habit of bargaining.

"I don't want to come back," he said, good-naturedly. "Drive at a good pace and you shall have your ten shillings and something over."

This was quite sufficient to send the carriage off at a gallop. The horses were fresh, and went in splendid style for a hack conveyance.

Very soon Mashing was left behind, and Lord Carew found himself in a winding road, or rather valley, bounded on the one side by the high chalk cliffs, on the other by a hill, whose magnificent verdant appearance struck him with admiration.

The hedges were full of wild flowers; the birds in the trees sang joyously. Royal thought the approach to the Priory simply perfect.

An ardent lover would have pictured his betrothed's delight at this lovely scenery, this beautiful rural place; but Carew surely failed somehow in his duty to the Lady Barbara, for it never occurred to him to think of her at all.

"Whose is this property?" he asked the driver, suddenly. "He ought to be a happy man. I don't think I have seen anything in England, certainly nothing in the south, to equal it."

"All this belongs to Sir Hubert Leigh," answered the driver, civilly. "I don't fancy he's a particularly happy gentleman; but I never saw him myself, so I really can't say."

"I suppose you are a stranger here?"

"I've been here better than seven years, sir; but sure it's more than double that time Sir Hubert was seen outside his own gate."

"Yet he's not an old man."

"He's as poor as a church mouse. There's not a tradesman, sir, for miles round but 'ld refuse to serve the Priory unless they had their money before they parted with their goods. Sir Hubert has been going down hill ever since his wife's death. He just lets the property go to rack and ruin. He shuts himself up in his library, they tell me, and so long as he's not disturbed people may manage his affairs just as they please."

"I am going to see him."

The driver stared at him in unmingled surprise.

"Law, sir! it must be years since anyone as much as entered the Priory gates. Are you sure he won't turn you out?"

"He invited me."

"Law!"

"It seems a lovely place!"

They had just entered Arle, and the dreamy beauty of the village struck Lord Carew with the keenest admiration.

"It's kind o' pretty," said the driver, less enthusiastically. "Sir, hadn't I better wait to bring you back?"

"Why? No, I am going to sleep at the Priory. You may set me down at the lodge gates."

"You'll get nothing to eat there, sir, worth speaking of. You'd best drive back to Mashing, and put up at the Golden Ram."

"I can't do that, my friend; I mean to sleep at the Priory. If you're short of a fare you might come over to-morrow in time to drive me back to catch the evening train to London."

"Right you are, sir."

They had reached the lodge gate. Royal tossed the man a sovereign with a pleasant nod of farewell, and stood watching until his carriage was out of sight; then having, as it were, cut off all chance of returning to Mashing, he applied himself to the business he had in hand.

It was a pretty lodge, built in the old Gothic style of architecture. Lord Carew rang the bell—no answer. He rang again; precisely the same result. Only then did the truth dawn upon him—the lodge was empty, and no wonder.

In spite of the climbing ivy, of the roses which peeped in at the windows, of the general picturesque appearance of the cottage, it would have been a sorry residence. There holes in the roof as large as a man's hand; the paper was peeling off the walls from damp.

"I suppose I had better open the gate myself, and walk in," reflected Royal; "somehow the whole business depresses me. I wish I had let things go their own course. I believe I should but for that picture in Uncle Julian's locket. I declare Lady Violet's face positively haunts me; I seem to see her at my side pleading with me to befriend her child! Well, I must go through with things now, and not forget that I am Mr. James Lorraine, lawyer, of the Middle Temple."

He had advanced now through an avenue of linden trees until he came to the entrance to the park. The beautifully-timbered grounds lay stretched before him, and he saw, to his dismay, there was nothing to indicate which of the three winding paths led to the house, whose tall white turrets he could dimly discern in the distance.

He stood for quite five minutes irresolute, then selected the path which seemed least overgrown with grass and weeds. He walked on and on, but he came no nearer to the house. He was thinking of retracing his steps when he saw a huge Newfoundland dog advancing towards him, barking furiously.

A kind word and a stroke of the hand seemed to convince the noble animal the intruder was neither tramp nor thief. He walked demurely at Royal's side, wagging his

tail as though doing his best to supply the welcome his owners neglected to offer.

"This is better than nothing," determined Royal. "The dog must surely know the way home. If I follow him implicitly I shall reach the entrance to the Priory at last."

"Boxer—Boxer!"

The voice was soft and musical; it sounded quite close. Another turn of the winding path, and Royal found himself in view of the speaker.

For an instant he started; he lost all power of speech, for it really seemed to him he beheld the original of the picture in his uncle's locket. It was as though Lady Violet Fane herself stood before him, only the brow was more thoughtful, the blue-grey eyes had something more of mournful earnestness in their depths.

"Boxer—Boxer!"

The dog sprang towards her. She stooped to caress him, and for a moment saw nothing of the other candidate for her notice. Royal found he must introduce himself.

"Miss Leigh."

Gladys turned and looked at him; no thought or suspicion of his identity entered her brain—nothing could have been more different from her preconceived idea of her unwelcome guest.

"Miss Leigh," persisted Carew, "I must claim your pardon for appearing before you in the light of a trespasser. I rang the bell at the lodge gates again and again, but I received no answer. My only resource was to try and find the way up to the house."

"What did you want at the house?"

Had she been a duchess her tone could not have been prouder.

"I wish to see Sir Hubert Leigh."

"My father sees no strangers."

"I think he will see me."

Gladys shook her head.

"I am quite sure he will not; he is expecting his lawyer from London on important business, and cannot possibly be disturbed."

Carew looked thoughtful; in reality he was wondering whether he had better at once explain his mission. Gladys misunderstood his silence.

"I can guess what you wanted," she said, with a strange softening of voice and manner; "you are an artist, and you want to make a sketch of the Priory. I am sure papa will have no objection if you do not go too near the house."

"You are very kind, Miss Leigh, but—"

"I am not at all kind; we are inundated with artists in the summer. I believe they think the Priory their own special property. You need not hesitate about disturbing us; my father never leaves the house till dusk, and then it would be too dark for you to sketch."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Leigh, but perhaps you would allow me to introduce myself to you; I am—" he stopped abruptly, his own true name he could not give, his assumed one stuck on his lips.

"It does not in the least matter," said Gladys, coolly; "there is no need for an introduction. You wish to sketch the Priory; in my father's name I give you permission."

She had turned to leave him, Boxer at her heels, before he found his voice.

"There is some mistake, Miss Leigh. I am here this afternoon at Sir Hubert's request."

"You are not Mr. Lorraine?"

He bowed.

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"I beg your pardon; you hardly gave me an opportunity. You seemed so determined to mistake me for an artist."

"You are more like one than a lawyer," said Gladys, gravely. "Mr. Lorraine, if you will come with me we shall be at the house in five minutes."

"Sir Hubert expects me?"

"Yes."

She had grown very grave and quiet. There was something almost severe in her manner, quite different from what it had been when

she deemed him a suppliant for a favour in her power to bestow.

They walked some yards in perfect silence, then she said, gently,—

"My father is in delicate health, Mr. Lorraine; I hope you will not fatigue him with more business details than are absolutely necessary."

"I assure you I will not,"
"My father is a genius," went on Gladys, proudly; "he is writing a book which will make him famous throughout the English-speaking world. It is not to be expected that until it is finished that he can pay much attention to business matters."

The supposed lawyer bowed assent.

"Even if his indifference to money matters makes us poor for a time," went on Gladys, hurriedly, "what does it matter? I am his only child, and I would rather bear any hardship than that one leaf should fall from the crown of laurels the publication of his work will fix upon his brow."

Royal looked at her half pitifully, half admiringly. Whatever her father might be this much was certain—her eyes were blind to all his faults.

"Your sentiments are very generous, Miss Leigh," he said, gravely.

"Not at all; I know what my father is capable of. I am content to wait until his genius wins its own reward."

"You are not like him?"

It was more an assertion than a question, and so Gladys regarded it.

"No," she agreed, promptly, "I am not at all like him; my life, my hopes and fears are made up of little things, of many trifles. I should not be capable of one great ambition, like papa."

He did not answer her. They were in the grand hall now, where once a butler and two tall footmen had held sway; it was empty and deserted now.

"Papa will be ready to receive you by five o'clock," said Gladys; "perhaps you would like to go to your rooms till then."

"Thank you."

Anthony came in answer to the bell and escorted Mr. Lorraine to the blue chamber. The old servant thought he had never seen a nobler face than this young lawyer's; again and again he found himself wondering of whom the stranger reminded him.

"Well," asked Joan, inquiringly, when her husband returned to the kitchen, "and what like is this Mr. Lorraine?"

"He looks like a nobleman."

Joan stared.

"Miss Gladys spoke of him as though he was just the dirt beneath her feet—to be sure that was before she'd seen him. I don't think she could speak of him like that now. I've seen plenty of high families as you know, old woman, but I never met a nobler-looking gentleman than Mr. Lorraine."

"How old is he—fifty?"

"Not thirty. I should say, and as pleasant-spoken as you could fancy; he's a sensible look, too, as though he knew what he was about, if only the master'd listen to him."

"Sir Hubert will never listen to anyone," returns Joan, who hated the baronet almost as much as she loved his daughter. "Why, he actually wanted Miss Gladys to send a telegram this morning to put off Mr. Lorraine, because his nerves felt shaken. Nervous, indeed! If only I were his daughter I'd make him hear reason."

"The estate's entailed safe enough," said Tony, with an air of relief; "or the master'd be quite capable of selling it to pay his debts, and leaving Miss Gladys without a roof over her head."

"It's not entailed."

"Surely!"

"No, the old gentleman and Mr. Hubert cut off the entail between them just after my lady married; more's the shame to them."

Tony looked thoughtful.

"Joan, I wonder Sir Hubert didn't sell it long ago."

Royal Carew threw himself into one of the old, chintz-covered chairs, and tried to resolve what he should say to Sir Hubert. Somehow, since seeing Gladys, he felt yet more indignant with him. He was certain the girl's hero-worship was misplaced, and that her father slighted and neglected her.

"It's a nuisance," he muttered to himself, "I shall have to remember I am James Lorraine, attorney-at-law, and that Sir Hubert is one of my clients. I can't go at him in my true character of his most long-suffering creditor."

A knock at the door, enter Tony.

"Sir Hubert is in the library, sir," he said, respectfully. "Will you let me show you the way?"

Royal followed him to a door before which velvet curtains were closely drawn. Tony pushed these aside, opened it, and announced,—

"Mr. Lorraine, Sir Hubert."

The visitor found himself in a pleasant, octagon-shaped apartment, furnished comfortably and even luxuriously. It was hard to believe that its owner was literally a beggar; but when he had seen the other rooms Royal understood that everything had been neglected for the library, and that here were stored all the best and handsomest articles.

The room was furnished in old oak, cushioned with crimson velvet; a crimson velvet rug covered the centre of the floor, the rest was stained. The windows were ornamented by the new process, which counterfeits stained glass, and the summer sunshine poured in only in subdued rays. The pedestal table was loaded with the newest pamphlets and magazines; a handsome American organ stood in a recess. Clearly nothing had been spared that could in any way add to Sir Hubert's comfort.

He rose to greet his guest with a slightly condescending air, as though the London lawyer were a very inferior personage to the ruined master of the Priory.

Lord Carew met him entirely on his own ground; seeing Sir Hubert extending two of his fingers he offered precisely the same number of his own. Perhaps this little incident, or the innate nobleness of his bearing, showed the Baronet he was going the wrong way to work. Sir Hubert's manner changed as though by magic, and he begged Mr. Lorraine to sit down in a tone that was almost courteous.

"I am very glad to see you; you must find London unbearable at this time of year. But perhaps you don't stick so closely to business as old Carlyle used to do?"

"Not quite."

Which was a distinct libel on the gentleman he personated, for the real Mr. Lorraine devoted himself to his profession with an energy which knew no bounds, and far surpassed that shown by his late partner.

"You wanted to see me," said Sir Hubert, airily; "you said there was business that could only be settled at a personal interview."

"I said it and I meant it, Sir Hubert."

"Upon my word I can't imagine what it is!"

"I fear your memory is short, Sir Hubert."

The Baronet looked at him cautiously.

"We had better understand each other, Mr. Lorraine. I am not a business man; I never was; I never shall be. I had complete confidence in Mr. Carlyle, which I am sure I may continue to his successor. In a word," concluded the Baronet, with a burst of generosity, "I place full power in your hands to act as seems best to you."

"Your confidence is most flattering, Sir Hubert; but in the present instance such power would be useless."

"Listen," cried Sir Hubert, in despair. "If the mortgage threatens to foreclose raise money and pay him off; if bills fall due renew them. The revenues of Arle are five thousand a year. Not above a tenth of that comes to my share. There must be plenty to pay the claims."

"Will you kindly give me your attention for ten minutes, Sir Hubert?"

Sir Hubert groaned, but submitted.

"Your chief creditor is—or, rather, was—Mr. Julian Brook, who advanced fifty thousand pounds upon the security of the Priory at the time the entail was cut off."

"Yes," admitted Sir Hubert, "at five per cent., and I am pretty certain the interest has been paid regularly. It took the half of my income."

"You afterwards borrowed other sums of a Mr. Bryan."

Sir Hubert winced.

"He was a money-lender, and bled me pretty freely. I don't care if he's never paid at all."

"The interest has been unpaid for years; the security, I believe, was the furniture and plate here."

"Yes—"

"Mr. Julian Brook bought this debt of Mr. Bryan; he was, therefore, your chief creditor. There are other claims from tradespeople, both here and in London, too numerous to mention; but, with the exception of your liabilities to Mr. Brook's heir, ten thousand pounds would set you free."

"Then raise it. Cut down timber—do any thing."

Royal grew impatient.

"There is nothing to raise it on. By the terms of the mortgage you cannot fell a single tree. You are completely at your creditor's mercy."

"I wish young Brook would die!"

"His claim would pass to some one else."

"Well, I don't see the use of your troubling me. I thought it was a lawyer's plate to get his clients out of their difficulties?"

"I will do my best for you. I am the bearer of an offer from Mr. Brook's heir."

Sir Hubert shook his head.

"It's no use. If he wants money I haven't any. The place is going to rack and ruin for want of repair. I deny myself even the necessities of life; I can't do more for him."

Royal privately disbelieved a good half of this statement.

"Will you listen to the proposal?"

"I suppose I must."

"There is a small cottage on the road between here and Mashing. If you will retire to that, and yield up peaceable possession of the Priory, all your debts shall be paid and an income of two hundred a year secured to you for the rest of your life."

"I'll see young Brook hanged first! Two hundred a year! Why, I paid my valet more when I was in my palmy days!"

"Two hundred a year," repeated the supposed lawyer, "and a house rent free; a clear start, without a single debt to trouble you. Really it seems to me an offer worth considering, Sir Hubert."

"I don't know that my debts trouble me now," rejoined the Baronet, coolly. "My daughter worries over them. I cannot teach Miss Leigh that ladies in her position have no need to think of such things."

"For her sake will you not consider the offer I have communicated to you?"

"For her sake!" repeated Sir Hubert, as though he had not heard aright; "why, it would be just ruin to her. Fanny the heiress of the Priory in a six-roomed cottage!"

"Sir Hubert, do you know the alternative if you refuse the offer?"

"Young Brook will be indignant. Well, hard words break no bones."

"It will be in his power to turn you from this house penniless."

"Nonsense!"

"Remember the years the mortgage has lasted—the amount of interest unpaid. I have read the deeds over and studied them carefully. Instead of paying your debts and allowing you two hundred a year, it is in your debtor's power to turn you out of the Priory penniless."

"Then, why doesn't he do it?"

This was an embarrassing question.

"He wishes not to proceed to extreme measures."

"I suppose he has nothing else to depend upon. I knew his uncle once slightly; he was a young man of no family."

"His sister married a duke."

"That doesn't prove what his brother was. I never knew he had a brother until you wrote and told me his nephew had succeeded to the claims on my estate."

"Indeed, Sir Hubert, you had better think seriously of my proposal."

"Your proposal?"

"The one I brought you, I should say."

"Perhaps you assisted young Brook to make it, eh?"

"I told him, certainly, it would be shameful if you were left unprovided for. I may say I suggested the provision."

"Provision fit for a pauper!"

"I have heard from Miss Leigh that you are engaged in literary pursuits. Surely—"

Sir Hubert interrupted him.

"I do not barter my brains for daily bread. Some day I shall be famous. Until then I am content to wait."

He was incorrigible. If he would have grown angry it would have been easier, but he stuck obstinately to his point; he would not leave the Priory.

It dawned upon Lord Carew slowly that if he and Lady Barbara wished to spend their honeymoon at the Priory their marriage would be postponed until Sir Hubert's death, unless they removed that gifted author by main force.

It was the greatest possible relief to Royal when Anthony knocked at the door.

"Dinner is served, Sir Hubert."

"A truce to business!" said the Baronet, lightly. "You have relieved your mind, Lorraine, and given me a frightful headache with your dismal prophecies. Now let us talk of pleasanter topics."

"But you will think over this?" pleaded Lord Carew, as though he had been urging some request of vital import to himself, "and you will let me return to the subject to-morrow?"

"We'll see."

CHAPTER IV.

SIR HUBERT led the way to the dining-room. They met Miss Leigh on its threshold, and her father performed the introduction.

She inclined her head very slightly, and did not offer her hand. She was transformed, indeed, from the plainly-dressed damsel Lord Carew had met in the park.

Her rich velvet and old lace made her seem like some old picture come down from its frame.

He read her character well enough to know she would never have bought such gewgaws for herself; and her father's sufficiently to be positive he spent all the money he could scrape together upon his own amusements.

The dinner was a success. When Gladys had got over her bewilderment at finding herself entertaining a guest, and seeing a handsome joint once more upon the table, she began to enjoy the novelty of the thing.

Mr. Lorraine might be only a lawyer, but he had the manners and breeding of a gentleman.

He talked of many things almost unknown to Gladys, and talked well. He told stories of the great world of London and its pleasures; he spoke of the Academy and the theatre, and when he saw the interest in Miss Leigh's dark eyes he could not help the question.

"Have you never been in London, Miss Leigh?"

"Never."

"She is quite a country mouse," said Sir Hubert, graciously. "Why, you have never been farther from the Priory than Mashing in your life, have you, child?"

"No."

"You would like London," said Royal; "there is so much to see."

"Yes," said Gladys, quietly, "I shall enjoy myself very much when we go to London."

"It won't be this year, Gladys," said Sir Hubert, with more seriousness than he had yet shown.

"It will be when your book is finished," answered his daughter, proudly. "Don't you know, papa, you said once you hoped it might be completed by the new year?"

It was curious to see how the two men gazed intently on their plates. Neither cared to meet the glance of the girl's clear eyes. One was wondering how she would take the news of the ruin his own folly had brought about, the other's whole heart ached for the disappointment which must come to her.

"You know, papa, we have quite settled it," went on Gladys, brightly. "The book is to be finished by January—next January, I hope—then we shall go to London for the season. You will show me all the places Mr. Lorraine has told me about, and we shall see heaps of clever people, who will want to know you after reading your book, and then in the autumn we shall come home to the Priory, which will have been done up and freshly furnished."

"Castles in the air, Gladys."

"They won't be always in the air," she said, brightly. "When once the book is finished all this will come to pass."

She rose then; the stranger held open the door for her, and then returned to his seat, but it was some minutes before either he or Sir Hubert found anything to say.

"You see," said the Baronet, at last, "young Brook must give me time just for the child's sake."

"Would it be for her good?"

Sir Hubert stared at him haughtily.

"Of course it would."

"I think not."

"Why not?"

"At best it would be but deferring the evil day. Better far, surely, for Miss Leigh to know the trouble—anything is kinder than suspense."

Sir Hubert groaned.

"The truth would kill her."

"I think not. Miss Leigh looks to me too brave for that. She would bear trouble, not sink under it."

She believes herself heiress of the Priory—she loves every stone of the old place."

"She loves you better. While you are by her side, Sir Hubert, your daughter can bear even separation from her birthplace."

When they went from table Sir Hubert led the way to the library. He provided his guest with choice cigars, and then almost before Royal could light one had fallen asleep.

Lord Carew looked at him in surprise, then the truth dawned on him. Eating, drinking, and sleeping formed Sir Hubert's daily round. As to the severe literary labours of which he spoke they existed—in fancy.

Noislessly the young Viscount rose and walked across the room to the writing-table. There, sure enough, were all the implements of toil. A quire of foolscap paper, cut into half-sheets and fastened with a clip, reposed upon a blotting-pad. The pages had even been carefully numbered, and a title page inscribed something after this fashion:—"A Work of a Lifetime, by Sir Hubert Leigh, Baronet."

But alas! alas! though Royal had the curiosity to turn several pages they were all actually blank—not a single sentence of the "work of a lifetime" had yet been penned. "And never will be," concluded Royal. "The man's an arrant deceiver. One thing I wonder very much—does he deceive himself?"

The marble clock chimed half-past eight. Far away in the distance Royal heard a sweet, rich voice. He gave one glance at the slumbering baronet, and quickly left the library.

Guided by the voice he reached a large, many-windowed room, which was still in twilight, and dimly discerned a slight figure at

the old-fashioned pane. Somehow his thoughts wandered strangely back to the night of his uncle's death as he listened to Miss Leigh's song. Sweet and clear the words rang out upon his ear:—

"Oh! love for a year, a week, a day,
But alas! for the love that loves away."

Was it really so? Was such love as Julian Brook's a thing not to be desired? Could it be that he and Lady Barbara would be happier in their calm, friendly regard than creatures who risked their every hope of bliss upon one wild passion?

It might be so, yet even as the thought crossed his brain another succeeded it. This girl who was singing, with her very heart in her words, would be one of those who loving once loves away. A sigh escaped him, the spell was broken, and Gladys started.

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you, Miss Leigh. Sir Hubert is fatigued, and—"

"And he sent you here!" finished Gladys. "I will ring for lights."

She did so, and Tony brought them in two wax candles in massive silver candlesticks, which did not half illuminate the grand old room. By their aid Royal saw that the apartment was far more desolate than any he had yet seen. Besides the piano there was actually no furniture, except a table, a sofa, and three chairs, and these were upholstered in threadbare satin; the floor was bare; the windows blindfold and uncurtained. Altogether the room looked weird and gloomy.

"Papa never comes here," said Gladys, half in explanation, half in apology, "but I generally sit here in the evenings. I like to be at the piano."

"You are fond of music?"

"I love it dearly."

"I wish you would sing to me, Miss Leigh, just to show you pardon my interrupting you."

She sang again—an old Scotch ballad this time.

Carew listened eagerly, but he felt that Miss Leigh would not have been like the heroine of the song; even for her father's sake she would not have become Auld Robin Grey's unloving wife.

The last note died away. Royal looked up to find Gladys watching him with her dark eyes.

"I cannot make it out," she said, slowly. "I thought a lawyer would be quite old and—"

"And?" repeated Royal, questionably.

"And common."

He laughed.

"I have known lawyers who were thorough gentlemen. Mr. Carlyle for one."

"Ah."

"Why do you sigh, Miss Leigh?"

"I don't know"—a far-off sadness in her eyes—"only do you believe in presentiments?"

"Sometimes."

She shuddered.

"I have one on me now. I can't explain it to you. I can't tell what has caused it, only I seem to know that a heavy sorrow threatens me."

"I fear it does."

The sad, grave answer was so unlike anything she had anticipated that Gladys started.

"You came to see papa on business, Mr. Lorraine; did you bring him bad news?"

"I can hardly say I brought him news."

"I don't understand."

"You know that Sir Hubert is in difficulties?"

"Put in plainly," she said, bitterly. "I know that we are miserably poor, that my father has hardly a sovereign to call his own. I thought you would help him to arrange his affairs."

"There is but one way of arranging them, Miss Leigh."

"You mean to rouse himself, to superintend



[ROYAL TURNED OVER SEVERAL PAGES AND FOUND THAT NOT A SINGLE SENTENCE OF "THE WORK OF A LIFETIME" HAD BEEN PENNED.]

the estate himself? Ah! he has not the health."

Royal shook his head.

"I don't mean that; the day for such a step is past. Sir Hubert has long been master of the Priory only in name. His creditor—his chief creditor, I mean—offers to pay all other debts, and to secure Sir Hubert a small regular income if he will give up possession of the Priory."

Gladys stood before him with flashing eyes. "He refuses—of course he refuses! I wonder you dared to suggest such a thing!"

"I suggested it for Sir Hubert's own sake, Miss Leigh."

"To give up the home of his forefathers—the house that has been in his family for centuries—to desert the Priory! How *dared* you think of such a 'hing'?"

Royal was speechless—not with indignation, but pity. What would this girl say when she knew the whole miserable story?

"I know his answer," said Gladys, proudly. "He told you he would live and die Leigh of Arle Priory; that nothing would induce him to give up his home; besides, he could not if he would. I am the heiress of the property, and I tell you I would sooner yield up my own life than Arle."

Still he kept silence. His very calmness frightened her. She spoke more gently.

"I daresay you meant to advise him for the best. You working, business men can't understand the feelings of those born to be landowners. You can't know that we Leighs love our home like our own flesh and blood."

"I think I do understand it."

"And, you see, your advice was mistaken."

"I am not prepared to admit that."

"Well, at any rate, papa will not follow it. He cannot. It is impossible."

"I think he *will* follow it."

"Mr. Lorraine!"

"Forgive me, Miss Leigh; you almost forced the words from me."

"You have said too much, or too little, at least. Explain yourself."

"You wish it?"

"I request it."

"Nearly twenty years ago, Miss Leigh—before you were born—your grandfather and Sir Hubert—then Mr. Leigh—united to cut off the entail."

"To cut off the entail!"

"Do you know what that means?"

"I think so—that it is in my father's power to leave the Priory to anyone he pleases. But that makes no difference, Mr. Lorraine; he has no relative in the world but me."

"It makes this difference. Long ago your father borrowed money on the Priory; he went on borrowing more and more; he is unable to pay it back, and so, in the eyes of the law, the estate belongs to the man who lent the money."

"How infamous!"

Poor Royal thought himself a little hardly used.

"Why?"

"It was like tempting papa to gamble away the Priory. Of course, the money must be paid."

"Sir Hubert says it is impossible."

"How much is it?"

"A great deal."

"How much?"

He saw she meant to be answered.

"Sixty thousand pounds, besides a considerable amount of interest."

"Sixty thousand pounds! And when must it be paid?"

He had expected her to be overwhelmed, but she seemed only put on her mettle.

"I daresay six months' delay would be granted if there was any chance of the money really being forthcoming."

Gladys clapped her hands.

"Then it is all right."

"I hardly understand."

"Papa must finish his book at once. He

won't like hurrying it, but he has no choice. The first edition will be bought up in a week. I read once of someone getting fourteen thousand pounds for a book that was only a novel. Papa's is a scientific work, so, of course, he would receive much more."

Carew's heart ached for her, but she must be undeceived. Better, perhaps, that his hand should remove the veil from her eyes than another's.

"Miss Leigh," he asked, gravely, "how much of his great work do you suppose Sir Hubert has accomplished?"

"I don't know; he would never tell me. Sometimes I think it is all written, and he is simply revising it; at others I fancy he is busy with the last volume."

Very gently, almost tenderly, the stranger spoke, and he purposely looked away from her that he should not seem to be spying the effect of his words.

"Miss Leigh, Sir Hubert's manuscript is only blank paper; the very first sentence of his book is unwritten."

(To be continued.)

WEALTH, station, applause, luxury, which are so often sought, are not necessary to happiness; they often minister to it, but it can flourish without them. Health is more essential, though there are some happy invalids. A moderate supply of the physical comforts of life seems needful, though happiness and poverty have dwelt together. The exercise of our faculties in some useful and, if possible, congenial direction is a large contributor. Idleness and overwork are both disastrous to happiness; so is vice in all its forms, whatever be the glittering pleasures it holds out. Successful endeavour of every rightful kind, obedience to the voice of conscience and reason, the love and help we give, even more than that we receive, are all ministering influences to happiness.



["I AM TO HELP YOU TO REGGAR YOURSELF, MISS VANE; THAT IS WHAT IT AMOUNTS TO, YOU KNOW!"]

NOVELETTE.]

LINDA'S KING.

CHAPTER I.

"Was ever anything so unfortunate!"

The time was December; scene the dinner-table of a very comfortable country house, and the speaker a remarkably pretty woman of five or six-and-thirty, but whom you would doubtless have guessed at five years younger, so smooth and unlined was her complexion—so bright and luxuriant her brown hair.

"It can't be helped," said the only other person at the dinner-table—a tall, military-looking man of fifty odd. "Don't vex yourself so, Kate; it won't do any good."

Kate pouted. Sir Henry and Lady Cameron had reached the last stage of their dinner, and so had been permitted at length to escape the Argus eyes of their domestics. The baronet took advantage of Simmonds, his butler, and his satellites departing to confide a piece of news to his wife—a very simple piece of news, and one that ought to have pleased the lady, since it was a stroke of good fortune that had come to a *protegee* of her own.

"Douglas Anstruther is to be Dr. Ward's partner, Kate," said Sir Henry; and then Lady Cameron gave vent to the exclamation with which our story opens.

"Was ever anything so unfortunate!"

"Of course it can't be helped," she said, slowly, as though turning over her husband's attempt at consolation; "but does that make things any better?"

"I don't suppose Linda will stay here long."

"We promised this should be her home when she left school. Henry, you know we did."

"And so it shall," said Sir Henry, stoutly; "but a pretty girl like that is sure to pick up a husband soon, specially when she is an heiress."

"I don't believe Linda will marry young."

"Why not?"

"She is afraid of men—I mean she has got it into her head she is sure to be wooed for her fortune."

"Little goose!"

"I don't see what is to be done," and Lady Cameron looked positively plaintive. "We can't put Linda off; she must come here, and stay—for years perhaps. And if she is here, she and Douglas must meet—there is no help for it."

"I don't see that it matters."

"Henry!"

"Linda knows nothing."

"Not a word. She hasn't the least suspicion that her father was anything to be ashamed of, but Douglas knows everything."

"Of course."

"Good and true as he is he, is almost morbid on that one point. I think he will be sure to hate Linda just because she is her father's daughter."

"Well, if he hates her it won't signify much. Anstruther is a gentleman. He won't tell the poor girl that wretched, old story; he'll simply not seek her society. Linda need never suspect the truth. Really, Kate, I think you are making a mountain out of a molehill."

"Perhaps," said Kate, dreamily, "but I am very fond of Douglas. I should have liked this house to be a second home to him—I should have liked him to spend all his leisure time here."

"So he shall."

"But it will be like having a thunderbolt hanging over my head to have those two together. I love Linda dearly, but I wish with all my heart you had never consented to be her guardian."

"Mr. Vane never asked me," objected Sir Henry. "His wife was my far-removed cousin, and he took advantage of that to put my name in the will. Thank Heaven, he didn't leave me a farthing! I have nothing to do

with the management of his ill-gotten gains. He must have guessed I should refuse to soil my hands with them, for he left all the care of his property to a firm of lawyers, and named me as his child's personal guardian, with the two hundred a-year, inherited from her mother, to defray her expenses until she married or came of age. I couldn't well refuse, Kate."

"No—but it makes it awkward now."

"I think you make the worst of it. Linda knows nothing of the past, and depend upon it no one will enlighten her."

"We shall see," said his wife, mysteriously.

"When will she be here?"

"Linda—on the fifteenth. School breaks up unusually early this year. Poor child! she ought to be accomplished, for she has been at Madame Monory's ever since she was seven years old."

"She will be glad her school days are over."

In fact, the Camerons knew very little of their ward. Miss Vane had been educated in Paris, and all they could do for her was to arrange she should spend the two months of the summer holidays either at Cameron Hall, or with them at some quiet seaside place. But for those yearly visits Linda might have been in danger of forgetting her own language; as it was, her foreign education had left no visible mark upon her.

She was singularly frank and childlike, fond of simple pleasures and home life; in fact, there were but two shadows on her lot—the fear Lady Cameron hinted at, that she might be wooed for her large fortune, and the fact that she had not a relation in the world nearer than her mother's distant cousin.

The fifteenth of December came, and brought Linda Vane back to her native land. Madame Monory's English governess brought her and four other young ladies to London; and then, poor woman, being unable to cut herself in five and accompany them to their destinations,

resigned two to their fathers, and saw the remainder off by train.

Linda was the last. Miss Brown stood on the platform inspecting the carriages until she discovered one she deemed perfectly safe, since it was already occupied by an old lady, a poodle, and a parrot.

"You are quite sure you don't mind my not waiting," said Miss Brown, when she had inquired of four different porters whether that was the right train for Templehurst, and received an affirmative reply from each.

"Perfectly," said Linda, smiling. "You would only lose your own train, Miss Brown. We don't start for another five or ten minutes."

Miss Brown kissed her warmly—in common with all Madame Mowry's establishment she loved Linda—then she walked quickly off to see after her own luggage, and catch the next train to Leamham.

Of course, Miss Vane was safe. The old lady with the poodle and the parrot would be a most effectual chaperon, even if a gentleman—Miss Brown feared gentlemen only second to his Satanic Majesty, for no reason that anyone could make out, for most certainly none of them had ever presumed to accost her without an introduction, or to care to speak to her if already acquainted—ventured to intrude.

Poor Miss Brown! Her confidence would have been shaken had she remained one five minutes longer.

The guard came round to clip the tickets, and discovered the old lady was in the wrong train, and bundled her, her parrot and the poodle out with scant ceremony.

The whistle had sounded, he was in the act of locking the carriage-door, when a gentleman came rushing down the platform, just in time to gasp out a question, receive a satisfactory answer, gain the shelter of the carriage and be locked in, as the train began to steam slowly out of the terminus.

Miss Brown's favourite pupil was shut up with one of the much-redoubted monsters, yclept men, as her sole companion.

A properly disposed damsel would have changed carriages at Cannon-street or London-bridge, Linda never even thought of it; to her unsophisticated mind the gentleman minus luggage seemed an improvement on the lady with the yelping poodle and noisy parrot.

She ensconced herself in her corner, opened a novel, and was soon lost to all her immediate surroundings.

Her companion read the evening paper, or tried to, but there was little in it. He soon flung it aside, and, for want of something better to do, fell to looking at his opposite neighbour.

And Linda was quite worth looking at; she had just one of those faces Grouse best loved to paint; her hair was the tint of brown which always looks like gold when the light shines on it; it was neither straight nor curly, but had an indescribable wave in it; she wore it in the style which came in ten years ago, and will probably never quite die out, because it is at once so simple and so becoming, just coiled low on the neck, the front not cut short, but drawn back, and rippling in waves, which rose from her head almost like feathers; her eyes were blue, dark, intense blue, and fringed with long dark lashes; her features were small and delicately cut; but, perhaps, her chief charm was her complexion; her skin exquisitely soft and creamy, its texture like satin, or which had the bloom of a peach; there were dimples in her cheeks, and her pretty red lips seemed just made for kissing; her cheeks might have belonged to a child of two years old; her eyes had a woman's wisdom; in point of fact, her character was like her eyes; Linda was an exquisite blending of child and woman.

It is a long journey, as anyone knows, from Charing-cross to Templehurst, and Linda had been travelling all night.

Her novel was very stupid; she dropped it with a little sigh, and turned to the window;

it was fastened; she tried to put it down, but the frame was stiff and resisted her efforts.

"Did you wish to open it?"

Linda saw her companion watching her, a man of thirty or so, tall and strong, with a kind of rugged determination written on his face.

"Please."

"It is very cold," he said, doubtfully; "you would be wiser to keep it shut."

"I want to open it."

He touched the window with his strong hand, it flew down, and a rush of cold air poured into the carriage.

Linda drew up the collar of her sealskin and shivered.

The stranger smiled.

"Are you convinced?"

"Quite."

"Shall I put it up again?"

"Please."

"You are very tired!" he said, pityingly, as he looked at her. "Why don't you try to go to sleep?"

"I am awfully tired!" and she gave a weary little stretch; "but one couldn't go to sleep in the train!"

"Why not?"

"I don't know!"

In a moment he had rolled up one of her bags as a pillow, and when she had put her head on it, he tucked the other over her, by way of counterpane.

"You will be asleep in ten minutes."

"Thank you!" Then, with a sudden fear, "But I may sleep too long, and get carried past my station!"

"Where are you going?"

"Templehurst."

"I will see you are not carried beyond."

Another five minutes and she was asleep. Douglas Anstruther, watching her, thought he had never seen so fair a face, and wondered what her friends were about to let her go travelling about the world alone.

Utterly ignorant in the cost of ladies' dress, he set down Linda, in her long plain coat and grey dress, her small untrimmed felt hat, as a poverty-stricken little damsel.

He would have been electrified had he known the coat cost thirty guineas, the hat, whose simplicity he admired, another two, and the many-buttoned boots the same sum.

There was nothing showy about the girl, but Mr. Anstruther had yet to learn there are few things more expensive than elegant simplicity.

"I wonder who she is?" he thought to himself. "So few people visit Templehurst, it ought not to be difficult to find out her destination! I have it! Of course, she is Mrs. Ward's holiday-governess! I know she told me she was going to get one for six weeks, because she couldn't manage all her children when the boys were home from school. Poor little thing!" and his voice took a softer ring, "I don't think you know what you have undertaken! Tom and Victor are awful rebels, and you look such a frail, delicate little creature to battle with the rough world!"

In fact, as she slept there opposite in such perfect security and trust, Mr. Anstruther thought she looked more fit to be taken care of herself than anything else.

He had rather congratulated his partner's wife on her holiday-governess, who was to keep the house quiet for the two doctors, and take all the worry of the children off their mother's hands; but as he looked at the little maid his heart misgave him. How would that delicate creature ever reduce those turbulent little Wards to order?

He had had some experience of them himself, for he had been a fortnight domesticated with the doctor's family.

A pretty little house at the other end of the village was eventually to receive him, but it would not be empty till Christmas, and then repairs and alterations would make further delay.

"Come to us," said his hospitable partner, and, nothing loth, Douglas had accepted.

Essentially a domesticated man, the doctor's cheerful home had attractions for him, and even the noise of half-a-dozen children had not made him regret his decision.

Linda woke with a start at a junction about half-an-hour from Templehurst.

"Are we there?" she asked, a little eagerly.

"Not yet. Are you rested?"

"Oh! yes; I feel ever so much better. You see," said Linda, forgetting the impropriety of making confidences to an utter stranger, "school only broke up yesterday, and I am so tired."

Of course she was after a hard term's work as junior teacher in a school. Of course she was "tired;" he only felt sorry more fatigue awaited her.

"Have you been there long?"

"Ever since I was seven years old," she answered, gravely; "more than half my life." She was an orphan, of course, and had worked up her way as articled pupil to be junior teacher.

"I hope you will like Templehurst."

"I like it very much, what I remember of it. I used to spend my holidays there when I was a little child, but it must be seven years since I saw the old place."

"It is very quiet."

"So I supposed."

"You will like Mrs. Ward, I think," he observed, anxious to say something encouraging.

As Lady Cameron was a great admirer of the doctor's wife, and had repeatedly lauded her virtues to Linda, Miss Vane answered this little speech so as to confirm Mr. Anstruther's mistake.

"I am sure I shall. I quite long to know her."

"Are you fond of children?"

"Very. I suppose she has several?"

"Six. I have been staying at Hope Lodge for a fortnight, and I have only just mastered their names and ages."

Linda laughed.

"Ah! I shall prove a better pupil."

And then the laugh died on her lips, the smile faded from his face. There came an awful sound as of two heavy bodies crushing against each other; the carriage lamp went out.

Douglas Anstruther with rare presence of mind caught Linda in his arms and laid her flat on the floor of the compartment; he knew it was her one chance, then he felt himself dashed violently forward and remembered nothing more.

It was the worst railway accident known in that part of the world. Entering the tunnel just before Templehurst station the train had dashed into a line of trucks waiting there for some inexplicable reason. Why those trucks had not been removed, and whose fault the neglect was, formed the subject of a long and tedious judicial inquiry, but that could not undo the consequences—four deaths and a dozen people seriously injured.

Douglas Anstruther came to himself in his own room at Hope Lodge, and his partner and his wife stood by him with anxious faces.

"You'll do now," said Dr. Ward, encouragingly. "You've no injury to speak of; you just got stunned. A good night's rest and you'll be walking about as well as possible to-morrow. Thank Heaven it's no worse. I can tell you, Anstruther, the sight at Templehurst station was ghastly."

Mr. Anstruther's thoughts flew back to his travelling companion.

"Where did you find me?" getting round to what he wanted to know by a very circuitous process, because he didn't like to ask straight out.

"Oh! I didn't find you. The porters had identified you and sent you straight here. Barns of Newton has been helping look after the injured. Very few of them are Templehurst people. Six have been sent to their homes, the others are in the cottage hospital."

"Didn't you expect your governess to—"

day?" asked Douglas, suddenly. "Miss—, I forget her name, Mrs. Ward."

"Miss Black. Oh; yes. She came by this very train, and wasn't a bit injured. Wasn't it providential, Mr. Anstruther? I have hardly had time to say a word to her, but she seems a very nice capable sort of person."

"A nice capable sort of person." This description as applied to his blue-eyed princess seemed to Douglas little short of blasphemy.

"I wonder how she escaped?" he said, aloud.

"Through the kindness of a fellow-passenger, who, at the first, fearing the accident, made her lay flat on the floor of the carriage; that saved her life."

"There were a great many people I know in the train," said Dr. Ward. "Sir Henry Cameron's ward, Miss Vane, was to have travelled by it."

Douglas writhed. From boyhood he had hated the name of Vane. His father and Gilbert Vane had been sworn friends and partners, a twelve years' alliance leaving the senior of the firm stripped of everything he possessed.

Mr. Vane never did anything to bring himself within the letter of the law; but when the firm were bankrupt it came out he had made investments in his wife's name which realised an enormous fortune.

He bought the ancestral estate of the Anstruthers; he left his daughter heiress to half a million of money, while his partner's only son had hard work to complete his medical studies, and literally possessed no penny he had not earned.

Mr. Vane had committed no crime the law could take cognisance of. He had betrayed his partner and benefactor; had enriched himself and his at the expense of the Anstruthers.

Society would probably long have turned a cold shoulder to him on account of these things, but he died opportunely; and now that eleven years had come and gone there was little doubt that the same people who had condemned Reginald Vane unsparringly would pay court to his heiress. She, at least—they would argue—was innocent of all wrong, it would be cruel to visit the sins of the father on the children.

People always remember this maxim, somehow, when the children happen to be heiresses; when they are penniless it is usually forgotten.

And now he had to hear the name—the name Douglas believed to be seared into his very heart—spoken casually; had to look forward to seeing its owner, for if she was domesticated with his dearest friends the introduction could not long be deferred.

Douglas Anstruther was a brave man, but at this prospect his courage failed him.

CHAPTER II.

LINDA VANE had been discovered senseless among the ruins of a first-class railway carriage.

Sir Henry never forgot his thankfulness when Mr. Barnes told him she still breathed; a few restoratives and the blue eyes had opened again, and Linda had come back once more to this troublous, workaday world.

"Where is he?"

Perhaps the strangest question that could come from the lips of a school-girl who possessed neither father nor mother.

"Who?" asked Sir Henry, eagerly.

"The gentleman who was in the carriage with me. He was so kind. Oh! please say he was not killed."

Sir Henry looked puzzled. The young surgeon from Newton took the answer upon himself.

"Killed! not a bit of it, Miss Vane. Anstruther has only got a shaking and a few bruises. He'll be about among his patients to-morrow, for he is Dr. Ward's partner, and

I assure you a great favourite already hereabouts."

Sir Henry kept blank silence. He and his wife had resolved to keep Linda and her father's foe apart, at all hazards; now it seemed they had been making friends on their own account.

"Now, child," said the Baronet, when he had collected his faculties, "we must go home. Your aunt will be in an agony of suspense."

It had pleased Miss Linda long ago to assume the relation of niece to the Camerons. She called them uncle and aunt, though no such tie existed between them. She liked it, and so, in truth, did they.

"Not quite killed," was Sir Henry's verdict, as he handed the little creature over to his wife. "Katy, would you have believed eighteen months could have changed our little girl into such a grand personage?"

The last summer holidays had been spent in Normandy with Madame Monory. It was well nigh a year and a-half since Lady Cameron had seen her.

"She is not altered," said Katy, stoutly, "she is only prettier. Linda, what have you done to yourself?"

"I 'spect I grewed," said Miss Linda, demurely, echoing Topsy's well-known sentiment.

Lady Cameron took her upstairs to the pretty rooms prepared for her, and kissed her again in her glad relief.

"I made sure you would be killed," she said, cheerfully.

"I might have been, only a gentleman made me lie down; he put me flat on the floor."

"And then?"

"I expect the collision came. I remember nothing more, only I feel now he saved my life."

"We must find him out, and thank him."

"He was so kind," said Linda, enthusiastically. "He took care of me all the way, as if he had been my brother."

"I wonder where he lives."

"Here," said Linda, dreamily. "I think he said he was staying with the Wards."

"With the Wards!" and Lady Cameron's voice faltered in spite of herself. "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. I think he is Dr. Ward's partner."

"Douglas Anstruther!"

"Do you know him?"

"He is one of our most intimate friends."

"I am so glad," said Linda, thankfully, "because then I can thank him."

Lady Cameron would have excused her from dinner that night, but Linda preferred to come to it.

Very fair and innocent she looked in a loose white dress, fastened at the waist by a Roman scarf. Her guardian's wife thought she had never seen anyone so charming as this girl, with her Greuze face and pretty, winsome ways.

"There is only one word for her, Henry," she told her husband later on.

"And that is—"

"Bewitching."

"I daresay a great many men will be of your opinion. I don't think you need regret my guardianship, Katy; that girl won't stay with us long."

Mr. Anstruther spent that evening in the solitude of his own room.

There had not been much romance in his life hitherto. He had lived his thirty years without once meeting a woman's face that touched his heart. His had been a busy life, without much time to think of love. He had never given a second thought to any woman, had never thought of such a sweet possibility as a wife until he watched that slight grey-robed figure sleeping opposite him in all the security of her innocence, all the faith of her childhood.

And now he was in the same house with her; they would be thrown daily and hourly into contact. He looked forward to the intimacy with a strange, mysterious pleasure. But

of one thing he had resolved—he would see her first alone. They had parted in dire peril, they should not meet again with even such kindly eyes as Mrs. Ward's to spy upon them.

So he got up early, and went downstairs, hoping that chance would favour him.

And chance did. Lillian Ward, the doctor's eldest girl, a pretty sprite of nine, met him on the stairs. He stopped to ask her opinion of the lady her mother called a "nice, sensible sort of person," and he deemed a "sweet child."

"Well, Lily, what do you think of your new governess?"

Lily's reply was short and conclusive.

"I hate her."

Mr. Anstruther felt as if a shock of cold water had been poured over him. He had always believed children and animals to be correct judges of character.

"Why, dear?" he asked, pleasantly.

"She's so ugly."

"Nonsense!"

"But she is," repeated Miss Lily, positively.

"You just go into the schoolroom and see."

"Is Miss Greuze there?"

"Yes."

"And alone?"

"Of course she's alone," replied Miss Ward, glibly. "We all hate her, even baby. It isn't likely we'd go and sit with her unless we were obliged."

It did not sound promising. But, then, Lillian was always accounted the spoilt child of the family. Her evidence might be prejudiced, so Douglas pushed open the door of the schoolroom, and advanced quickly, a grave expectancy on his face.

Where was the childish figure—where was the sweet Greuze face—of his little companion?

Someone was poking the fire vigorously. The someone turned round and confronted him.

He saw a tall bony woman, who might have been any age from twenty-nine to fifty, so thin that her dress sat in plaits. Her sandy hair was surely coloured nowhere but in Scotland; her weather-beaten face was angular and wrinkled; her hair too scanty, its parting too broad; her dress of a broad Tartan plaid positively set Mr. Anstruther's teeth on edge.

And yet, there was nothing repulsive about Miss Black. She was just a plain, sensible, homely woman, as Mrs. Ward had said. She was judicious and painstaking to the backbone; and if she had not the gift of winning children's hearts, remember that when a woman has had to get her living for any number of years by teaching children and being constantly with them, what little charm of manner she once possessed may well have died out if there was no natural love for the little creatures to soften her heart.

"Miss Black?"

"That's my name," said the good woman, readily enough; "and you're the doctor's partner, I expect. They said you were in the train. It's a narrow escape we both had, Mr. Anstruther; and I've been thinking we ought to be thankful."

There were tears glistening in her mild eyes. Douglas wrung her hand. It was cruel to blame her for the disappointment, which from first to last was caused by himself.

"I am sure we ought. I hope this untoward beginning will not have prejudiced you against Templehurst, Miss Black. My friends have been looking forward to your arrival."

"Aye, but she's a sweet face," said Miss Black, heartily. "The mother, I mean. And what a girl she seems to have all these children! And none of them come up to her."

"They may, in goodness, later on," said Douglas. "Yes, Mrs. Ward has a sweet face, and she's a good, true woman. I don't wonder you're surprised; it took me some time to realise she could have boys as old as Tom and Victor."

"Tom's eleven turned, he told me."

"And his mother is twenty-nine. They

married early, and the children came apace. But I don't think it's an unhappy home, Miss Black."

The mild eyes glistened again.

"I never saw such a happy one. I've not been here twenty-four hours yet, Mr. Anstruther, but I've managed to find out that."

In a day or two the children had ceased to "hate" Miss Black. They found her good and kind, and respected her; but they never gave her any of that spontaneous love, those unasked caresses, children lavish on their favourites.

Mr. Anstruther was left with an unsolved problem. Who was his pretty friend with the Grenze face and blue eyes? Decidedly she was not Dr. Ward's governess. She had seemed to imply she was in the scholastic profession. Douglas ran over in his mind all the families resident in Templehurst, but he could think of none likely to boast of a governess.

"I wish you had been home," said Mrs. Ward, three days later. "Lady Cameron came to ask us all to go to a large party on Christmas-Eve. I didn't know what in the world to say for you, so I accepted."

"Who is going?"

"Everyone. It is a regular institution here. Every Christmas-Eve there is a party at Cameron Hall. Every family in the neighbourhood who ever visits the Camerons receive an invitation, from Lady Marsden to poor Mrs. Brown, the half-blind widow of the old vicar. The children go, too—all over five years old. It is the nicest gathering you can think of. High tea at six; then games and music till half-past nine. The children and the old people disappear then. They have supper and go home, and there is dancing for all who care to stay till twelve, when supper is served in the old hall. A Christmas carol is sung, and all disperse. I have never missed one of Lady Cameron's Christmas parties since we came to Templehurst."

"Her parties are always charming, but I never happened to be in the way at Christmas time. What a nice woman she is!"

"And what a pity she has no children!"

"Aye," said the young doctor, gravely, "I suppose there is a thorn in every lot, and that is hers."

"Well, did I do right to accept for you?"

"Certainly. I would not stay away on any account."

For Douglas said to himself, surely at Lady Cameron's Christmas-parties he must meet the girl whose blue eyes haunted him as no woman's face had ever done before.

"Of course she will be there," he muttered to himself, as he dressed for the party, "and I shall know at last what to call her. It is provoking to have to think of her without a name."

Fortune did not favour Douglas. He was called to an old woman in the village just as he was setting out, and this delayed him so that it was past seven when he reached the Hall. He was shown into the drawing-room, but Lady Cameron was not there. The beautiful old room was peopled chiefly by the very smallest of the guests—half-a-dozen children too tiny to mix in the games of their elder brothers and sisters; but Douglas felt no disappointment at the absence of his hostess, for directing the sports of the Lilliputian party was Miss Black, and at her side the girl in whose company he had travelled from London nine days ago.

He noticed, even then, that she (already it was she with Douglas) had captured all the children's hearts. She was sitting in the most undignified fashion on the hearthrug with a mite of three perched on her shoulder. A tress of her golden hair had escaped its coils, and fell below her waist, and her dress of unpretending muslin showed the whiteness of her rounded arms.

Douglas forgot Miss Black—he forgot everything but his princess. He went up to her, and took her hand. Pamela Black, who had all a true woman's affection for romance, scented a love-story at once, and smiled to a

remote corner of the room with as many children as would follow her.

"I think we hardly need an introduction?"

"No, indeed," said Linda, blushing rosy red. "I shall never forget your kindness to me, Mr. Anstruther. Uncle says you saved my life. He wanted to go and thank you, but I knew you would be here to-night, and I wanted to do my thanking myself."

"There is no need—and you really were not hurt."

"I was stunned at first, and one of my arms was bruised, but—think what it might have been if you had not been there!"

He smiled; Linda's gratitude was so naive and touching.

"It was a sad introduction to your return to Templehurst." Then abruptly, "Do they make you comfortable?"

Linda thought men used strange words; but, perhaps, from having spoken a foreign language so much for the last few years the word comfortable hardly struck her as much as it would have done another girl.

"Uncle and aunt—they are kindness itself!"

Mr. Anstruther started.

"I thought you were a governess?"

"Did you? I am afraid I should spoil the children too much. I never could say, 'No, dear, it isn't good for you.'"

Still no suspicion of the truth came to him.

"And you are staying here?"

"Yes. I am to stay at Cameron Hall until I come of age. Dear old place! I should like to stay here always."

"Can't you?"

She shook her head.

"I have a home of my own, and some day, when I have grown older and wiser, I must go and live there."

"You don't seem fond of it."

"How can I be? I never was there in my life. Oakdene is nothing but an empty name to me."

Oakdene! The veins in his forehead stood out like thick purple cords; without thinking of Linda's bewilderment he turned on his heels and left her. He could not continue the conversation—he could not speak another word; the wound was all too keen. This girl whom he had loved at first sight, whom he had taken for a little, lonely governess, was the heiress of an untold wealth, and—the mistress of his ancestral home.

She would rule where he had thought to be master—all that had been his birthright was hers. The only woman who had ever charmed his fancy, the only creature he had desired for his own, was his enemy's daughter—Linda Vane.

It was a bitter night, but Douglas felt neither frost nor wind. He paced the terrace for full an hour, and in that lonely walk he shaped his future course.

"She need never know. Even if she were not his child her wealth would be barrier enough between us. I can meet her with the courtesy due to a woman, and to one of Lady Cameron's guests—the rest I shall forget."

Forget! And he came of a race loyal to their last breath, faithful while life lasted. The race from whom Douglas sprang from had made it their boast that the Anstruthers were "not good at forgetting."

"I have just seen your ward," said Douglas, with well-feigned indifference, when he met Lady Cameron five minutes after his return to the house.

"Have you—she is very charming, is she not?"

"She is not the least like her father—in looks."

"She is her mother in face and mind. Douglas, for your sake, I would gladly have avoided this meeting, but it was beyond me."

"What does it matter?" said Mr. Anstruther, with admirable calm. "I don't suppose she has ever heard my name in connection with her father."

"She knows nothing of that miserable business—nothing in the world."

"Just so. Then my name can have no painful associations for Miss Vane."

"I was not thinking of Linda."

"Of whom, then?"

"You."

"Lady Cameron, I am not worth a regret from you; besides, I do not regret this meeting. I have often wondered into whose hands my old home would fall. I know at least that Oakdene will have a beautiful mistress."

"I am so glad you take it like this."

He laughed a little bitterly.

"Did you expect me to walk out of the house directly the young lady was made known to me, or that I should denounce her publicly as the child of a felon—he was a felon at heart? No, dear Lady Cameron, those are not nineteenth-century manners."

Kate felt uneasy, and was glad to pass on and leave him. The little ones were going, and she found Linda busy helping a long array of nurses to wrap them up. Linda looked flushed, but Lady Cameron thought there was a shadow over the sweet face.

"Are you enjoying yourself, darling?"

"Oh, yes!"

"I thought you looked tired."

"I have done such a stupid thing. I wanted to thank Mr. Anstruther for his kindness the other day, and I suppose I worded my gratitude wrong, for he looked as if he could have killed me, and rushed out of the room."

"Linda!"

"He did, aunty. Miss Black was there, and saw him; she said perhaps he had toothache."

"Perhaps he has," said Lady Cameron, weakly catching up the notion; "but, Linda, did you say anything that could offend him?"

"I didn't mean to."

"Think."

"He was asking me if I lived here, and I told him yes, but my home was at Oakdene. It was after that he left me. Perhaps he thought I meant to let him know I was an heiress."

"He is very peculiar."

"Is he? I thought you liked him?"

Lady Cameron was in a dilemma; for Linda's own sake the truth must not be told, and how to invent any plausible explanation she could not think.

"I do like him very much, but I never thought he got on with young ladies. I think, dear, I should avoid him as much as possible."

"Very well," said Miss Vane, in a hurt voice; "only, aunty, when a man saves your life it's rather strange to show your gratitude by avoiding him as much as possible."

Mr. Anstruther walked home from the Hall with Mrs. Ward, whose one theme of conversation was the heiress.

"She is the sweetest girl I ever saw. The children are in love with her. I should never have taken her to be so rude."

"Why not?"

"She is not the least stuck-up. I think I never saw anyone I liked so much at first sight. She has promised often to come and see us and play with the children."

Mr. Anstruther went to church on Christmas Day, but the old wrong rankled in his heart. He loved Linda Vane, but he could not forgive her for being her father's daughter, and her fortune in itself would have been enough to separate them.

But walking in the village in the afternoon with Dr. Ward they came on Sir Henry and Miss Vane. The Baronet, who had none of his wife's tact, knowing he wanted to consult the elder doctor on some sanitary question, calmly tucked his arm in his, and carried him off. The street was only broad enough for two; Linda and Douglas were obliged to fall behind, and follow their seniors together.

"I am so sorry."

They were her first words. She looked just as she did when he saw her first, even to the sealakin coat and felt hat. Douglas almost forgot her parentage.

"For what, Miss Vane

"That I have vexed you. I must have said something very rude last night to make you leave me so suddenly, but the fact is I have been abroad so many years. I often make little mistakes in my English, and make things sound quite different to my meaning."

"I am quite sure you never vexed me," he said, quickly. "I was abominably rude, but—"

He stopped, almost as embarrassed as Lady Cameron the night before.

"Miss Black thought you had the toothache," said Linda, "and that it came on then with a twinge."

"That was it; a sudden pain. I could not command myself. I ought to have apologised to you before."

"Oh, no! But I am so sorry."

"You had a merry gathering last night?"

"Very. I think Aunt Kate's parties always go off well. She makes everyone feel at home."

"Especially those who have no home."

"Haven't you a home?"

She had no sooner spoken than she recollected herself, and added, quickly,—

"Please forgive me. I am always saying rude things, you see."

He smiled. It was impossible to be angry with Linda.

"I have no home," he answered, sadly, "though I cannot think how you guessed it."

"I thought you were like me."

"Like you?"

"Yes," went on Linda, dreamily. "You live with the Wards, but you don't belong to them. I live at the Hall, and Lady Cameron is very good to me, but you know really I haven't the least bit of claim on her, and I think sometimes I must be a great nuisance to her and her husband. It can't be nice to have a girl foisted on you for years whether you like it or not."

"I don't think you will stay years at Cameron Hall, Miss Vane."

"I must. It is in my father's will that I should live with my guardian till I come of age."

"You may have chosen another guardian long before that."

"I couldn't. No one would be so nice as Sir Henry."

"But if you married?"

"Married!" the girl's face softened strangely. "I don't think I shall ever do that."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, only I never picture myself married. I am very fond of day-dreams, but I never think of myself as anything but Linda Vane."

"And what are your day-dreams? Do you mean to live at Oakdene, and keep a great deal of company?"

"I don't think I shall ever live at Oakdene."

"Why not? Isn't it a nice place?"

"It is very beautiful, I believe. I will show you a picture of it some day, but I have very painful recollections of it."

"I thought you had never been there."

"No, I have never been there. You will think me foolish, but I have a kind of superstitious dread of Oakdene."

"Why?"

"I can hardly explain it, only I loved my mother. You see my father was always busy. I don't remember him in the least, but my mother I shall never forget. People say she was like me, but that is all nonsense; she had the sweetest, loveliest face I ever saw, and she was so gentle. I was very little at the time, not more than five I daresay, but looking back I can remember that she had no regular illness; she was never in bed; she only grew thinner and thinner every day, till at last one morning they told me I had no mamma."

Linda stopped with a sort of choked sob.

"Afterwards I heard the servants talking, and they said Oakdene had killed her. Within a year my father died, too, and I went to school. I don't remember papa's death or

anything, only I know when people congratulate me on being mistress of Oakdene I long to tell them I hate the place that killed my mother, and I often think I would give up everything I have, and earn my living just like Miss Black, if only it could give me my mother."

Douglas was touched.

"You don't know the value of your honours, Miss Vane," he said, kindly. "The world will soon teach you better."

"I don't think so."

"And so you hate Oakdene? Some people have loved it well."

"Have they? I don't think I ever shall."

"And in your day dreams where are you if not at Oakdene?"

"Oh! I am in London; I am quite sure I shall not be rich always. I often seem to see myself quite poor."

"You can't be poor, Miss Vane, while you have Oakdene; its revenues are counted by thousands."

"Are they? Have you ever seen the place, as you seem to know it so well?"

"When I was a boy I often spent my holidays there."

"Did you—with my father?"

"No, it was not his then."

"And was it a nice place?"

"A beautiful one."

"And what was there dreary or gloomy about it? What could the tenants mean when they said Oakdene killed my mother?"

He knew, but from his heart he prayed the knowledge might be spared her.

"I would not think of that, Miss Vane," and he almost marvelled at himself as he made the proposal. "You said just now we were alive; at least we have shared a common peril, and we are both without any very close home ties. Do you think we might be friends?"

"I should like it of all things; friends are better than relations, because we choose them for ourselves. Oh, yes, Mr. Anstruther, we will be friends!"

She put out her little hand in its dainty, grey-kid glove, and Douglas clasped it warmly. She was his enemy's daughter, the usurper of his birthright, but she had had no hand in the wrong done him. His love she must never be, but surely no human law could prevent their being friends. Of course she would marry soon and settle down in her rôle as a great county lady; the village surgeon would be forgotten then. Their intimacy at best could be but a brief and fleeting one, but for the time they both spent in pretty, sleepy Templehurst surely they might be friends!

Douglas saw no danger to either in the arrangement. He was a clever, thoughtful man, but it never dawned on him the compact just made was one well-nigh impossible to fulfil—that the friendship, if warm enough to merit the name, might drift into something else. He knew he had been within an ace of falling in love with Linda, but he deemed the peril over, and would have been very indignant if anyone had told him it was a case not of falling, but of having fallen. He was a great admirer of Lord Byron, and yet, on this bright winter's day, he never recalled the lines of that world-famed poet, which might have warned him:—

"If free from passion, which all friendship smothereth,

And your true feeling known and understood,

No friend like to a woman earth discovers

So that you have not been—nor shall be—

lovers."

CHAPTER III.

LINDA VANE went home on that Christmas afternoon with a strange, new gladness at her heart. She could not have told why the world seemed so fair to her, she did not even realise herself how much she prized Douglas Anstruther's promised friendship. Linda was too young to understand the crisis of her life had come, and that, all unwittingly, her heart had slipped out of her own keeping.

She found Lady Cameron in her boudoir. She smiled at Linda's happy face.

"Your walk has done you good; where did you go, child—through the village?"

"Yes; we met Dr. Ward and Mr. Anstruther; they walked with us up the Templehurst Hill."

"Isn't the doctor nice?"

"I didn't have much chance of finding out, uncle absorbed him completely. I think they were discussing public baths and drainage."

Lady Cameron looked surprised.

"Then you were left to Mr. Anstruther?"

"Yes; do you know, Aunt Kate, Miss Black was quite right about the toothache? I told Mr. Anstruther she thought it was that made him leave us so suddenly last night, and he said yes, a sudden pain seized him."

"Then I suppose you have forgiven him?"

"There was nothing to forgive. We have agreed to be great friends, Aunt Kate; and only think, he knows Oakdene so well, he used to spend his holidays there when he was a boy."

Lady Cameron felt bewildered.

"Linda," she said, gently, "I have known Douglas Anstruther a great many years, and I have heard the story of his life. Don't talk to him about Oakdene, child; the subject is a painful one to him."

"It didn't seem so."

"The place is mixed up with the saddest part of his life, child. Take my advice, talk to Douglas Anstruther of anything rather than your home."

A little sobered, and very much surprised, Linda was turning to leave when Sir Henry entered, a small velvet casket in his hands.

"I am a very forgetful guardian, Linda, I was to give you this directly after your nineteenth birthday, and here are ten days slipped by."

"What is it?"

"Your mother's jewels. When she knew she was dying she sent them to me with a request I would take care of them for you."

"But—my father—"

"Yes, he was alive then, but he was a busy man. Perhaps she thought he would overlook the charge, perhaps she fancied another wife and other children would make him forgetful of his first-born. I cannot explain it to you otherwise; I only know this casket has been in my strong box all these years, and I have never even glanced at the contents."

"Linda shall inspect them to-night in her own room," said Lady Cameron, kindly. "She will like to be alone when she sees her mother's jewels."

It was just what Linda wished. They spent a very quiet, happy evening, and, somehow, it seemed quite natural that Mr. Anstruther should drop in after dinner and make a fourth in the little circle.

"Well," said Lady Cameron, inquiringly, when they happened to be alone for a moment.

"What does that monosyllable mean?"

"It asks a question. Have you forgiven her?"

"Whom?"

"You know."

"I change my question, then, and say for what?"

"Her parentage."

"I think she is all that is pure and true, and I hope you will find her a husband worthy of her."

"Oh! Perhaps you have a friend you could suggest for the post? Naturally you are anxious for the poor child to marry; she would then be far removed from Templehurst—and you."

"You are unjust."

"Don't let us quarrel. See, here comes Linda; the child looks happy, doesn't she?"

They broke up early. It was but little after eleven when Linda Vane sat down by the fire in her own room, the velvet casket on a little table near her—her maid had been dismissed. Her beautiful hair fell round her like a golden veil; her slender form was wrapped in a dressing-gown of sky-blue cashmere. Very thought-

ful and subdued was the fair face to-night. As she had told Mr. Anstruther, Linda remembered her mother perfectly. She had loved her with a child's passionate fervour, and she could not open the little casket without a strange yearning for the mother she had so worshipped.

The key turned slowly in the lock, the casket was open. Truly the gems were rare—a suite of pearls of wonderful size and purity, a locket set with diamonds, rings, brooches, trinkets of all descriptions, mostly of great value, and at the bottom of the casket, well-nigh hidden by its brilliant contents, a folded paper, sealed with red wax, and bearing this inscription:—

"To my daughter Linda, should she remain the heiress of Oakdene—otherwise to be destroyed unread."

Linda understood. Her mother, knowing her husband's ambition, had fancied he might contract a second marriage and obtain the son so ardently desired. This letter, of course, was some farwell wish about the beautiful home she had never ruled at—some wish that could only take effect if her own child inherited the property. Thus far Linda saw nothing strange or unnatural in her discovery, and yet her fingers trembled as she broke the seal.

"MY MUCH-LOVED CHILD,—

"You will read this letter only if you are your father's heiress, and I feel a dim presentiment that this misfortune threatens you. He loves me so intensely I cannot believe he would ever put another in my place or give my child rivals in his heart, and so my Linda—my little girl whom I have so loved—I write to warn you solemnly of your duty.

"You are so young now, darling, you can't understand, and later on you will be so rich no one will tell you. You must not reproach your father, dear. If he sinned it was for love of us; but, child, never rule as mistress of Oakdene; never take that property as your own, or a curse will rest on you for ever.

"Linda, Oakdene never should have been ours. It is the true and lawful property of the Anstruthers. Claude Anstruther and your father were partners. The alliance brought one ruin, the other wealth. This has caused my death, dear, the *knowing* that we were living on ill-gotten gains, that our whole fortune belonged rightly to the Anstruthers. When I think of that grand old family exiled from their rightful home, when I feel that we whom they befriended have caused their ruin, my heart aches with such bitter pain I can welcome death gladly. I have spoken to your father, but in vain. He bids me think of my child. I do think of her, and I conjure her with my dying breath to make restoration. Linda, something tells me your father will not linger long after me, and that you will come to your inheritance early. I know my husband meant you to be of age at eighteen. I was eighteen when you were born. Full power will be in your hands then. Put no faith in Hill and Leslin, your father's lawyers, but judge for yourself, and yourself alone. If you need legal help go to Mr. Dyason, of the Inner Temple. He used to be our greatest friend. The day your father purchased Oakdene he cut him publicly in the street. My darling, this restoration may make you poor enough in this world's goods, but at least you will have peace. No thought of others' ruin will be at your door to trouble your last hours as it has done mine. They will call my illness by many learned names, dear, but remember always one thing, and one only, killed me—Oakdene."

The wax candles were expiring in their sockets when Linda put down her mother's letter. She felt as though joy, happiness and peace had left her for ever. Never more could she hold up her head. It seemed to her the weight of shame and remorse must crush her to the ground.

No wonder Mr. Anstruther had started when he heard her name; no wonder he had rushed from the presence of Linda Vane of Oakdene. Oh! how he must despise her! Oh! how her

careless words spoken only this afternoon must have tortured him! Oh! was there any creature in the world so miserable as she!

He was here toiling as an underpaid assistant-surgeon, and she—child of the man who had befriended him—was the great heiress of the place.

Linda shed bitter tears of shame at the thought.

Restitution! Of course it should be made. If she had to give up every farthing she possessed and go out into the world like Miss Black, she would go sooner than Douglas Anstruther should suffer further wrong from her.

She was glad she was not to go to Messrs. Hill and Leslin, the lawyers who had charge of her property. They were self-made, skillful men of business, but Linda had never liked them. She must put a few questions to Sir Henry Cameron about her father's will. Then she would go to London and see Mr. Dyason.

"Linda, what is the matter?"

Lady Cameron might well ask. She was terrified when she saw Linda at breakfast the next day. The girl was white as sculptured marble. There were purple rings under her eyes—the eyes themselves were swollen with crying. She looked as if she had been ill for weeks.

"I think I sat up too late."

"You have been fretting."

"I couldn't help it," said Linda, gladly accepting this view of the case. "You see, I remember mamma so well, and the jewels brought it all back to me."

"Well, you must cheer up. Your uncle has gone out shooting. I don't know what he would say to such an altered Linda."

At first Miss Vane regretted her guardian's absence, but she knew Lady Cameron shared all his secrets, and bethought herself it would be easier to extract information from her.

"Aunt Kate," she said, suddenly "do you remember my mother?"

"Perfectly. I never knew her as intimately as I wished. She was very quiet and retiring, but I loved her dearly."

"What did she die of?"

There were few questions that could have been so unwelcome to Lady Cameron.

"What put that into your mind, Linda?"

"I was thinking. I know she just faded away, but I never heard any name given to her illness."

"The doctors called it consumption. You need not be afraid, darling, though you are her very image. Everyone said the disease was not in the family. There is no chance of its being hereditary."

"I am not afraid. How strange it all seems! I had a little brother once. I wish he had lived."

"Then you would not be an heiress?"

"No. Aunt Kate, is it really true I was to come of age on my eighteenth birthday?"

"As far as money matters were concerned your father made a most peculiar will. On your eighteenth birthday you were to come into full possession of your fortune, with the power to dispose of it by will; but you were to reside with us, and not to marry without my husband's consent until you were one-and-twenty."

"I see."

"In fact," went on Lady Cameron, "your father took more care of you than of your property. If you liked to give Oakdene to the lunacy commissioners to-morrow for a new asylum he couldn't prevent you; but for three years you can't choose a husband unless we approve of him. I think your income is twenty-five thousand a year. I'm not quite sure, for it has been accumulating at interest and compound interest ever since your father died—and it is none of it settled on you, except the little dower which comes to you from your mother. It has often struck people as odd that the heiress of such enormous wealth should hitherto have had such a small allowance. Sir Henry is going to get you a cheque-book and open an account for you at the bank. You may spend seventy pounds

a day, I believe, and yet have no fear of being ruined. Messrs. Hill and Leslin have managed very well for you, and I think things had better be in their hands still till you come of age and set up a grand home of your own."

"I always thought papa was a poor man?"

"He began life as a clerk, at a hundred a year. He was very clever in business matters." Linda had got all she wanted. She tried hard to rally her spirits and seem as usual, but it was beyond her, and directly after lunch she was forced to retire to her own room and lie down.

"Won't you dress for dinner, miss?" asked her maid, coming in about six with a cup of tea. "The master has come home and brought Mr. Anstruther."

Meet Douglas Anstruther! Meet the man her father had defrauded! Linda's cheeks tingled at the thought, but she only said, slowly,—

"I think not, Mary."

"Is your head no better, miss?"

"No, it aches and aches. I think I am best up here."

She thought a good deal of her own history that night, and the hope came to her with a strong conviction that her father had repented his cruel fraud. His will, she knew, had been made just before his death, and by it she was prevented using any portion of his fortune until she came of age. He had fixed eighteen as her majority, that she might decide her course before she was fettered by love or marriage. The more she pondered over it the more certain she felt her father knew of her mother's letter, and had so arranged his affairs that she was free to make restitution if she would.

"I shall have his sanction," thought Linda. "He cannot tell me, but I shall feel he knows."

She was downstairs very early the next day dressed in her grey dress and long sealskin coat.

"I'm going out," she told the old butler, gravely. "Simmonds, I shall not be home to lunch."

Simmonds stared; that Mary had taken her young lady's breakfast upstairs he knew, but that Miss Linda, who yesterday had been confined to her own room with headache, should now be tramping off by herself no one knew where, at eight o'clock in the morning, did seem to him a trifle strange; but Linda smiled on him and conquered any scruples he might have felt. It is some people's birthright to win servants' hearts, and it was Linda's.

She walked briskly down the village, got to the station in good time, and ensconced herself very comfortably in a first-class carriage. The express train got to London in two hours and a-half, so Linda found herself in the Temple before twelve, and only then did her heart sink at the thought of the task which lay before her.

She might find Mr. Dyason had died, he might be gone away; worse than all, he might refuse to see her, as the child of the man he had despised—that was the worst of all. Linda resolved promptly she would not send in her name; at least she would spare herself a point-blank denial.

It was a relief to find the lawyer's name, at any rate, remained in its old place. Linda found a brass plate inscribed "Dyason and Carlyle," which was a very welcome sight, and she rang at the bell, with the sensation she was progressing.

"Can I see Mr. Dyason?"

An ancient clerk surveyed her attentively. Linda's pretty face was certainly a novelty in the Inner Temple.

"Have you an appointment, miss?"

"No," returned Linda; "but I have come up from the country on business of the greatest importance. I must see Mr. Dyason this morning."

Perhaps the "must" was effectual; perhaps the pretty face was powerful; perhaps the clerk reflected that the second morning after Christmas Day is not a very busy occasion,

and that his master had really only come to town to open his letters. Anyway, he placed Linda a chair, and went to the head partner's private room.

"A young lady is asking to see you, sir."

"A young lady! Who is it, White?"

"I don't know, sir; someone of importance, I should say. She has come up from the country on urgent business."

"Not collecting cards, or begging petitions, White? You know there are shoals of them about at this time of year, and I don't want to be disturbed unless it's urgent."

"I think it is important, sir; she's too young for the collecting-cards, I think."

"Show her in."

Linda saw a man of sixty or sixty-five, with a shrewd, intelligent face, and thoughtful grey eyes; his hair was perfectly white, but his form upright as a lathe. Only to look at him you knew he was a gentleman in thought and feeling. He glanced at Linda, and then he started.

"I ought to know you," he said, pleasantly. "I am quite sure I know your face, but I can't recall your name."

Linda half trembled.

"You are in trouble?" said Mr. Dyason, quickly. "You look over young to have to do with law. Had you no relations to come here instead of you?"

"No. Mr. Dyason, my mother directed me to come to you; you will not refuse to help me."

"I never refused to help anyone in trouble yet. Sit down and tell me what I can do for you."

"I am Linda Vane."

She knew by the change in his face that he remembered her father's story, and in perfect silence she handed him her mother's letter.

You might have heard a pin drop while he read it; then he folded it slowly, and returned it to her.

"Well?"

"I want you to help me, sir."

"To do what?"

She never flinched.

"To restore Oakdene and its revenues to Mr. Anstruther."

Mr. Dyason watched her carefully.

"I suppose you are turned eighteen?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And you have made up your mind?"

"Quite."

"Do you know that it will take half your property?"

"I daresay."

"You talk of restitution, but you are in no wise bound to make it. Oakdene is yours in the eyes of the law. You were a child when the transaction took place, and even then those most interested confessed they could bring no legal complaint against your father."

Linda's eyes filled.

"Won't you help me?"

"You are such a child. You may be regretting it before you are a year older."

"Did you read that letter?"

"Yes."

"Then do you think I can regret anything that saves me from what killed my mother?"

"Hem! Twenty years ago Claude Anstruther possessed Oakdene and ten thousand a year, while his share in the business was worth another fifty thousand, if you admit he was deprived of there by your father's agency when the crash came, five years later, you have to remember this fortune has been alienated for fifteen years. You would have to restore two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, with interest and compound interest. That would make a hole even in such a fortune as yours!"

"I don't care."

"Hill and Leslin are your father's lawyers, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"What will they say to it?"

"I don't care. Mr. Dyason, won't you understand I want to clear my father's name."

I want to be able to hold up my head and look the whole world in the face."

"You know your father was made bankrupt?"

"No."

"The firm failed for fifty thousand pounds. Mr. Anstruther paid his share—ruined himself to do it. Your father grew rich apace, and never cared for his creditors. If you refund a princely fortune to Douglas Anstruther these people will have a right to feel themselves injured."

"They must be paid."

"Do you know what this will leave you?"

"I don't care"—her face was working painfully—"I have had a good education. I can earn my living as a governess."

"It won't be so bad as that—you will have the two hundred a year that was your mother's dower. Nothing can deprive you of that; but, Miss Vane, there is a vast difference between Oakdene and twenty-five thousand a year and nowhere and two hundred."

Linda nodded her head.

"You are getting near now," she said, in her sweet, frank manner. "I am sure you are going to help me."

"Help you to beggar yourself? That's what it amounts to, you know."

"Can we do it quickly?"

"How impatient you are; but, Miss Vane, Douglas Anstruther is as proud as you are. I doubt if he will accept your generosity."

"He must."

"He is very proud. It must be done by deed of gift, settling Oakdene and the money on him and his heirs for ever. Yes, that will do. He can't get it aside then, for he is sure to marry some day for the sake of his name."

Linda's heart sank. She could bear to be penniless, and yet she felt she could not bear to see Douglas Anstruther with a wife at his side.

"Miss Vane," said the old lawyer, gravely, "this ought not to be done hurriedly. I assure you no such sacrifice is binding on you. Take time to think over it."

Linda shook her head.

"I don't want to think any longer. I know I mean what I say. Every day I delay I shall feel I am disobeying my mother."

"And don't you think of your mother's child?"

It was quite dark when a small figure entered the avenue of Cameron Hall. Sir Henry and his wife came out to meet her full of alarm. They led her into the drawing-room, and there by the light of the lamp they saw the pretty face had recovered its serenity. All the tear stains, the sadness of yesterday had disappeared. It was their own bright-eyed Linda once again.

"Where have you been?" cried Lady Cameron, in a voice which had a strange kind of sob in it, for, however much she might try to disguise the fact, she loved Linda very dearly. "You naughty child, you have scared us to death."

"It has done her good, wherever it was," said Sir Henry, kindly. "Now, Linda, confess your sins."

"I have been to London."

"To London!"

"Yes"—she felt it must be known, and the sooner the better—"and please I'm not an heiress any longer."

"Linda!"

"I know all," she said, simply. "There was a letter from my mother in that jewel-box telling me, and so I went to London to-day to see Mr. Dyason."

It flashed upon husband and wife that Dyason and Carlyle had been the solicitors to the Anstruthers.

"It is all quite right," said Linda, dreamily. "He says there is quite money enough. Mr. Anstruther will be master of Oakdene and have back all he lost through us, and all the creditors will be paid in full."

"And you?"

"Oh, I shall have my mother's fortune."

"Two hundred a year!"

"It will be quite enough, and if I am too poor for you to let me stay here I'll go to London and be a hospital nurse. It is all quite right, but oh! I feel so strange. Is the room turning round, or am I only giddy?"

And then without another word Linda fainted away.

CHAPTER IV.

"Nothing could induce me to take it. I should not think of such a thing."

The speaker, of course, was Douglas Anstruther. The time was just four days after Miss Vane's interview with Mr. Dyason. The young doctor had been summoned to London by a mysteriously vague telegram, and had arrived to find the deed signed and sealed which restored to him all, more than all, he had once deemed his birthright.

"You must," said Mr. Dyason, rather as though he rejoiced at the compulsion. "You can't help yourself."

"I can refuse to have anything to do with it."

"You can't."

"Why not?"

"Because you have only a life interest in the matter. This deed"—touching it—"conveys estate and money to you and your heirs for ever. Those words 'and your heirs' put it out of your power to undo my client's work, I fancy."

Douglas groaned.

"Have you seen her?" he asked, suddenly. "Do you know what kind of creature you have allowed to strip herself of everything for a mere chimera. She is the prettiest, most innocent child. I don't suppose she ever realises what it means to be poor."

"I have seen her."

"Well."

"And I admit that she is charming, but I don't fancy, Mr. Anstruther, she will ever need to realise what it means to be poor."

"Why not?"

"She is sure to marry, and to marry young. Men don't expect a dower with a face like hers."

"Sell herself to the highest bidder," muttered Douglas. "I don't think she'll do that."

"There are such things," said the lawyer, dryly, "as marriages of affection."

"Are there?"

"I wonder you never thought of marrying Miss Vane yourself?"

"I had not an idea you had allowed her to beggar herself until I came here."

"You might give her back Oakdene and the larger half of her fortune. I think it would be a most suitable arrangement."

"Do you. I hate suitable arrangements."

"You are very unforgiving. I thought that now at least you might have forgiven her for being her father's child."

"I can't forgive myself for robbing her, and I can't forgive you for bringing me into the scrape."

"Well, she is sure to marry, and Douglas Anstruther, let me tell you her husband will get a treasure. I wonder who he will be?"

"You speak as if he were fixed on already."

"I believe he is."

"What makes you think so?"

Mr. Dyason hesitated.

"I insist on knowing," said Douglas, hotly.

"I may be mistaken, only when this deed was in contemplation I suggested there might come a time when she had other claims on her. Miss Vane blushed so deeply I thought the time could not be far off."

"Mr. Dyason, are you sure this mad act cannot be undone?"

"Certain!"

"Nothing can restore Oakdene to Miss Vane?"

"Nothing but your marrying her."

"Then I can't help wronging her!"

"You won't need to be troubled with the thought of it. Of course, you'll throw up

your profession and settle at Oakdene, and then, in all probability, you'll never cross each other's paths again."

But this did not strike Mr. Anstruther as a particularly pleasing solution of the difficulty.

He was so cross that, whereas he had told Mrs. Ward he should remain that night in town, he went straight back to Templehurst, and reached Hope Lodge about five o'clock.

He met the children and Miss Black out walking.

He knew that Mrs. Ward was keeping her room with a sick headache, so he expected to find the drawing-room deserted, and went into it to warm himself at the ruddy fire.

Maudie Ward lay asleep in an easy-chair. She had not been very well, and had stayed at home when the others went out.

Douglas watched the pretty child's face gravely, then, believing himself alone, he half-muttered one word,—

"Scarlatina."

"Are you sure?"

He looked up; sitting close to the sleeping child, half hidden by the little one, was Linda.

Strange, that all the way from town he had been picturing their meeting, and wondering what to say to her, and now it should come about in this commonplace fashion.

"I feel certain!" he said, his own interests buried in those of the doctor at once. "You ought to go home at once; you may take the infection."

"I have taken it, if I am going to. I shall stay here."

"You shall not!"

"Listen," said Linda, gently; "I must! There is Miss Black due at her post in a large boys' school next month, she would lose her living if she took the disease; Mrs. Ward is too delicate to undertake the nursing alone. I shall stay here, and Miss Black will take the children to the Hall."

"And what will Lady Cameron say?"

"There she is, ask her;" for a carriage had come cantering down the road, and was stopping before the doctor's.

At that very moment Dr. Ward came from another way.

He and Lady Cameron met upon the doorstep.

"Don't bring her in!" was Anstruther's greeting, as he hurried out to prevent the doctor ushering in his guest.

The door, thanks to his latchkey, was already open.

"Now, you mustn't be alarmed, but I am sure Maudie has the scarlet fever."

The father's face grew pale, Lady Cameron's voice shook,—

"But Linda! Is she here?"

"She tells me she means to remain and share the nursing. Whatever risk there is she has already run."

There was a hurried consultation. Dr. and Mrs. Ward protested against Linda's sacrificing herself, but Lady Cameron read in the doctor's face the comfort her presence would be; and looking at Mrs. Ward's delicate features, and knowing how very soon another little life was expected at Hope Lodge she could not grudge the troubled household her darling.

"I shall take Miss Black and the children to the Hall. Here they come. I will wait in the carriage while you bundle them up some clothes, and I will leave you Linda. Douglas, will you take care of her? Remember, we love her dearly, and can ill spare her from our home."

"I will remember."

The Wards knew nothing of the strange good fortune that had befallen Mr. Anstruther. They had never heard the link that connected his past with Miss Vane's. They were grateful from their hearts to Linda.

Maudie loved her dearly, and she had the gift which is nature's own, and never acquired of nursing. She was ten times as valuable as poor Miss Black with the best intention could have been.

"You have got your wish."

This was his greeting to Linda when Douglas entered the sick room an hour later, and found Maudie in bed, and Miss Vane in her soft grey dress in charge of the invalid.

"I think you always do."

She looked at him, and he at her. A strange light shone in her eyes.

"Have you forgiven me?"

"For what?"

"Being my father's daughter. Oh, Mr. Anstruther! I must have seemed cruel and heartless to you on Christmas Day; but I knew nothing then—nothing in the world!"

"I was sure of that. And so they have let you ruin yourself for a mere chimera?"

"I was so glad to do it! Mr. Anstruther, I am sure he wished it at the last. It is just as though I had done it for him."

"If I could have found a way of undoing your work it should not stand," said Douglas, solemnly; "but you have been too clever for me!"

"But this does not change things, does it?" said Linda, wistfully. "You don't take back your promise—we are friends still?"

And his next words, though spoken in a tone of deep feeling, almost took all joy from her heart, all colour from her cheek.

"I think not, Miss Vane; I fear that compact of ours was a great mistake."

"A mistake!"

"You and I can never be friends; it is an impossibility. I was mad to think of such a thing."

With a look in her blue eyes that smote him to the heart Linda turned away to her little patient. Through all the days that followed she never spoke an unnecessary word to Mr. Anstruther. They were doctor and nurse—nothing more.

Maudie did not die. There were two or three times when she was in danger, and one night in particular, when Douglas thought the morning would find her gone; but she rallied again with the electricity of childhood, and when the New Year was six days old she was pronounced convalescent, and even allowed to be wrapped in her little dressing-gown and carried to another room.

They made a little festival of the event. Douglas Anstruther, ever a children's slave, and her parents came to have tea in the pretty little sitting-room where Maudie had been carried.

Lady Cameron, who was having another juvenile party at the Hall, sent a real iced Twelfth cake and a goodly parcel of "characters" to amuse the small invalid, and so, after all, Maudie had her share of the season's merrymaking.

Dr. Ward was summoned to a patient; his wife fell placidly asleep in her easy chair. Maudie was perfectly absorbed in the delights of inspecting the "characters," which, though the little company numbered only four, she fully intended should be "drawn" presently; and so, to all intents and purposes, Douglas Anstruther was alone with his enemy's daughter.

"When are you going home?"

It was the first time she had addressed to him any but the most necessary, commonplace remarks since the moment when he told her their compact was absurd, and friendship between them impossible. The blue eyes were fixed steadily on his face as she asked her question.

"Home! Where is home?"

"Oakdene."

"Never, I think."

"I thought you loved the place?"

"I should find it peopled with ghosts—ghosts of the past; besides, it is too large a house for a single man. I shall never live at Oakdene until I can take my wife there."

"Your wife!"

"Why should I not marry?" he cried, a little impatiently. "I am not an old man; even you, Miss Vane, cannot call me venerable."

"Of course not. Is—is the wedding to be soon?"

"Never, I think."

Linda looked bewildered.

"I cannot understand you," she said, simply. "You seem to have but one word at your disposal. Whatever I ask you you answer, 'Never.'"

Douglas looked at her strangely.

"I may have set my affection on one particular face, so that no other has any charm for me. I told you the answer as I feared it would be the truth. Had I consulted my own wishes, I should have said to-morrow."

"You could not be married to-morrow," objected Miss Vane, "unless the arrangements are made already."

"How matter-of-fact you are!"

"Well, you won't be tried by my society much longer. Very soon Maudie can spare me; then I am going to London for a week's quarantine before I go back to Cameron Hall."

"Why don't you call it home?"

"I don't know," half-dreamily; "I don't think it is my home really."

"Your day-dreams have come true in part," said Mr. Anstruther. "You said you could never picture yourself living at Oakdene."

"Ah, I am free to please myself now! The career that would have been Utopian for the heiress of Oakdene will be suitable enough for Miss Vane, of nowhere in particular."

"And what is that idea?"

"You can't care to hear it."

"Why not?"

"You object to me; you told me yourself friendship between us was impossible."

"Most impossible," he rejoined, decidedly; "and yet I care very much to hear about your idea."

"I mean to be a hospital nurse."

"Nonsense!"

"I thought you would laugh at me. You think me unworthy such a calling."

"I think you mad to talk of it."

"And yet you seemed satisfied with me here. I heard you tell Dr. Ward nursing came to me naturally."

"If it does there's no reason you should wear out your youth and strength in such a cause."

"But I am very strong."

"You look it!" ironically.

"And really I think I should succeed at it."

"You are much too young—and pretty."

"Both defects will be remedied in time."

"The first, perhaps—not the last."

"There is nothing I dislike so much as old maids, who persistently cherish the remains of any prettiness they may once have had."

"But you will not be an old maid."

"I shall."

"Why?"

"It is my vocation."

Mr. Anstruther looked at her fixedly.

"Then Oakdene will never be inhabited in my lifetime," he said, very fiercely.

"I don't see the connection of the fact."

"I shall not go there without my wife."

"Just so."

"And the only wife I shall take there is Linda."

Linda looked at him with scorn flashing from her beautiful eyes.

"You might spare me your ill-timed merriment, Mr. Anstruther, I think."

"You misunderstand me."

"I think not," idly; "I am not good at forgetting, and I can recall an afternoon, not yet a fortnight ago, when, here in this very house, you told me I was unworthy even to be your friend."

"I never said such a thing."

"I heard you."

"Then your ears played you false. What I said was between you and me friendship is impossible."

"That means the same thing."

"No."

"It must."

"Shall I tell you what I meant?"

No answer came, no words; but the droop-

ing of her eyelids seemed to invite him to continue, and so he went on.

"I think I fell in love with you at first sight; I only know your face haunted me as no other woman's had done. I formed a theory of my own about you, I thought you were Mrs. Ward's holiday governess!"

"Perhaps you would have been kinder to me if I had been."

He would not answer her.

"I thought how young and fragile you looked for such a life. I believe I had a vague hoping that, being one of the doctor's family, I might help you to bear your burdens. When I came to my senses after the accident my first thought was of you."

"And mine of you," said Linda; and she would gladly have bitten her tongue out to recall the admission a minute afterwards.

"It came on me with a shock when I knew the truth, how that, instead of being poor and lonely, you were one of the greatest heiresses in England. I am not one of those who think a man must be a fortune-hunter because he marries a woman richer than himself, but when I heard you were mistress of Oakdene I felt the barrier between us was, indeed, impassable; the whole world knew how I lamented my lost home and—"

"You despised its possessor."

"I never despised you. After the first blow I liked to think Oakdene belonged to you, that your face would brighten the home I loved."

"And yet you said our friendship was impossible."

"And so it is. Linda, I love you with every fibre of my nature; nothing will content me but the like affection from you. I don't want your friendship, I won't have it. The only thing I will take from you, Linda, is your heart."

"My father," she said, sadly, "have you forgotten?"

"I have forgotten nothing. I know how you robbed yourself for my sake. You said to me 'it is as though he had done it himself.' Linda, what does it matter whose Oakdene has been all these years so that it is now not mine, nor yours, but *ours*?"

He hoped he did not plead in vain; there was a dewy tenderness about the blue eyes which seemed to argue in his favour, but, unluckily, kind Mrs. Ward—who would have been the last person in the world willingly to interrupt a lover's *tête-à-tête*—chose that moment to wake up.

"How quiet you all are," she said, rubbing her eyes. "Has Maudie drawn the 'characters' while I have been asleep?"

"I've been ready for ages," said Miss Maud, it must be confessed in rather an injured tone of voice; "but I couldn't get Linda to listen to me. She would keep talking to Mr. Anstruther, and they spoke so low I couldn't hear a word they said."

The last clause should have been consoling, but, alas! Douglas and Miss Vane had stopped their interview at such a critical moment that there would be little repose or comfort for either till they could resume it.

Linda went up to the child's couch.

"I thought you were asleep, dear!" she said, gently. "What a lot of 'characters' for four people!"

"We can each draw one, and I shall keep the rest for the children," said the mistress of the ceremonies, with grave importance. "Now, mamma, shut your eyes; you must not look the least little bit!"

Mrs. Ward drew a very uninteresting "character;" so did her little daughter; but there was a delighted exclamation from the child when she saw that Linda had got the queen.

"That is just right!" she said, clapping her thin hands. "You will be the nicest there ever was, Linda! You see, you are so sweet, no one could vex you!"

"I think some people will!" said Linda, looking at Douglas a little wistfully.

"See here, Maudie!" said Mr. Anstruther, gravely; "queens are lonely when they rule

alone! Tell Linda to look round among her friends and choose a king to share her power and soothe her sorrow."

"She would have to choose you!" said Maudie, promptly. "There is no one else nice enough! Besides, she told me she liked you better than anyone here; so, of course, you must be Linda's king!"

Douglas looked at Linda. There was no mistaking all the tenderness of the glance; the girl was touched to her heart, and there was a patkos in her voice as she asked, suddenly,—

"Mr. Anstruther, will you be my king?"

Two years have passed since then, and Oakdene has a mistress whose beauty is the talk of all that county side, and who reigns supreme in her husband's heart.

People know, in a vague sort of way, that Douglas Anstruther recovered all his ancestral property; they do not quite understand the "how and wherefore" of this transaction; but all who have ever been his guests, all who have ever called him friend, would assure you with one voice that, dearly as he loves his home, fond as he is of the home of the Anstruthers, he holds his wife far dearer.

He is in Parliament now, and people say will one day be a peer of England.

It may be so, but Douglas will value no title his Sovereign can bestow on him so much as the one he gained on Twelfth Night two years ago at the bedside of a little child—LINDA'S KING!

[THE END.]

WONDERFUL TOWERS.

THE ancient city of Pisa, Italy, is famous for its lofty and magnificent structures, some of which have very interesting histories. None of them, however, is so wonderful as the celebrated leaning tower.

This building was commenced in 1174 by a Pisan architect, named Bonanno, by William of Innsbruck. It is of cylindrical form, one hundred and seventy-nine feet high, fifty feet in diameter, and leans twelve feet nine inches from the perpendicular. It consists of eight stories, each of which has an outside gallery projecting from it.

From the summit, which is reached by several hundred steps, a beautiful end extensive view may be had of the surrounding country.

The misconception was discovered before the tower was finished, and the upper tiers were so shaped as to partly counteract the arcuation.

At the top of the tower seven immense bells were so placed as, by their weight, to counterbalance the leaning of the tower.

The highest tower in the world is at Cremona, in northern Italy; it is three hundred and ninety-six feet high. It was begun in 1283, and the bells which are in it were cast in 1578.

An astronomical clock, made in the year 1594, is placed in the third story.

The Florentine campanile was commenced in 1334, by Giotto, the great painter, architect and sculptor. He commenced the erection of the tower with the determination to surpass all the ancient structures of this kind, both in height and in richness of design.

But Giotto having died in 1336, the tower was completed by Taddeo Gaddi. Its height is two hundred and seventy-six feet, and it is divided into four tiers. It is of equal dimensions from bottom to top, and is built on the Italian Gothic style.

On the basement floor there are two rows of tablets in relief; they are the work of Giotto. There are also many beautiful statues on the upper tier. It was the original design of Giotto to have a spire surmount the present tower. And the columns which were to support it may still be seen on the top of the building.

The famous tower known as Giralda is situated at Seville, Spain. This tower, when

originally built by Philip Guevara, the Moo was only two hundred and fifty feet high. But in 1568 a magnificent belfry one hundred feet high was added, and it is now the second highest in the world.

The campanile was called Giralda because of the brazen weathercock in its top-story. Although the figure weighs a ton and a half it is easily turned by the wind.

It is said that a very fine campanile was situated at Salisbury, England. It is supposed to have been two hundred feet high, and was probably destroyed by Sir Thomas Wyatt, the younger, while leading an insurrectionary mob.

BETWEEN THE LIGHTS.

"The sun has sunk, and after him the star Of Hesperus, whose office is to bring Twilight upon the earth, short arbiter 'Twixt day and night."

How sweet the stillness that pervades this hour! The outer sounds are hushed, the clang of traffic has ceased—even the busy footsteps grow fainter and fainter as they die away in the far distance. Ah, those tired feet and wearied hands of toil—very welcome to them is this calm, restful interval!

Between the lights! It is the hour of sweet idleness, for not only the labour, but the cares of the work-a-day world are laid aside, and even our thoughts are free to wonder at our will.

This brief period—in Milton's phraseology, "the short arbiter 'twixt day and night"—is a social time, for usually there is a gathering of the house inmates, whether the stay-at-homes, or the wanderers abroad; or for the converse of friends who oft-times "drop in" for a pleasant chat. It is, too, "the children's hour," which Longfellow has made so memorable by his verse while in solitude.

"To the sessions of sweet, silent thought, We summon up remembrance of things past."

And as the curtain of grey twilight falls over "the day that is dead," by some dim enchantment it seems to rise again upon the fairer and brighter scenes of long ago—

"And the forms of the departed Enter at the open door; The beloved, the true-hearted, Come to visit us once more."

BAD HANDWRITING.—In spite of the old-fashioned theory—upheld by bad penmen undoubtedly—that the poorer a man's handwriting is the more character it has, the majority of letter-writers, authors, scholars, and journalists are envious of the clerk and copyist with their one talent for writing a clear and beautiful hand. As a nation, we have sadly degenerated in the art of using the pen. Comparing the beautiful and uniform handwriting of the last century with the skimming, spider-track, rail-fence style of the present day, one almost regrets the fact that the goosequill has gone out of fashion, and a stiff and awkward writing implement been substituted in its stead. A fortune awaits the man who will invent a flexible writing stick—not a gold pen tipped with platinum—of some non-corrosive material. It is so hard to break in a pen; and, having worn down the points to suit your style, they are likely to snap or splutter before you have tossed off a dozen pages of manuscript. Then there is the annoyance of getting a fibre between the nibs, analogous to that of getting a bit of meat between the bi-cusps at the dinner-table; and nine persons out of ten will wipe the pen frantically on the occiput to rid it of the filament—and catch a hair! A new steel pen is as awkward as a phenomenally stiff collar, or a pair of new shoes; and, moreover, as the average penman is in continual danger of "impaling himself on his own pot hooks," perhaps the only relief is found in the type-writer, which seldom betrays one into a loose and slovenly style of handwriting.

FACETIÆ.

THE worst error of the press—when you try to press the niece's foot under the table, and it turns out to be the aunt's.

GOLDEN HINT TO TRAVELLERS.—The best letters of credit to travel with are most decidedly £-s-d.

MAMMA (dining out): "It isn't polite, Bobby, to smack your lips when eating. You never do that at home." Bobby: "Cause we never have anything worth smacking over."

THE young lady who burst into tears has been put together again, and is now wearing hoops to prevent the recurrence of the accident.

OLD GENT: "Ah, Mrs. B., did you keep a diary during your visit to that country?" Mrs. B., indignantly: "No, sir; I didn't. The family bought milk from the neighbours."

A **STR. HENRI**'s man, courting a young woman, was interrogated by her father as to his occupation. "I am a paperhanger on a large scale," he replied. He married the girl, and turned out to be a billsticker.

A boy, presented with a cake to share with his sister, was told that in cutting it he must give her the larger part. Reflecting a moment, he passed the cake to his sister with the remark: "You cut it."

A LECTURER was dilating upon the powers of the magnet, defying anyone to show or name anything surpassing its powers. A hearer demurred, and instanced a young lady, who used to attract him thirteen miles every Sunday.

Two men were discussing material used for building purposes, and among the rest laths. Commenting on the fact that the prices of laths was comparatively high, one of them remarked:—"I don't see what in the world keeps laths up;" when a third party, who never takes a chance so when he sees it, made the simple reply, "Nails."

"A nice husband you are!" said madam, in a passion. "You care less about me than about those pet animals of yours. Look what you did when your poodle, Azor, died." Husband (quietly): "Well I had him stuffed." Wife (exasperated): "Yes you wouldn't have gone to that expense for me—not you, indeed!"

YOUNG FARMER (touching his partner's handkerchief): "Is that a handkerchief?" Young lady (holding up the bit of lace): "Yes, Mr. Hayseed, is it not very beautiful?" Young Farmer: "Yes, ma'am, it's purty, but on such a hot night as this I shouldn't think one of 'em would be enough."

"Yes," said a fashionable lady, "I think Mary has made a very good match. I hear that her husband is one of the shrewdest and most unprincipled lawyers in the profession, and, of course, he can afford to gratify her every wish."

LITTLE Jennie was capsize in a boat one day, and would probably have been drowned had she not had presence of mind enough to keep her hands and feet moving, and thus keep herself afloat until help came. When she was retiring that night her mother told her she must thank God for having rescued her from a watery grave, which she did in the following way:—"Dod, I am obliged to oo for helping to thave me from drowning—and then I had a 'tittle shenth mythelf."

AN English visitor at one of the smaller Spas in Germany was complaining the other day to the garçon at his hotel that the waters he took really seemed to have not the slightest effect, so far as he was concerned. "But you see, monsieur," replied the waiter—who it should be said was under notice to quit his place—"it is necessary to be patient. Now I well remember a lady at this hotel last season who took the waters, and she did not die until she had been here close upon six months!"

A MAN in Birmingham boasts that he has three mothers-in-law living. Strikes us the thing for him to boast of is that he is living.

A MAGISTRATE asked a prisoner if he was married. "No," replied the man. "Then," replied his worship, amid peals of laughter, "it is a good thing for your wife."

SUN can talk as sweet as peaches to the women she hates worse than rat-poison, while two men would be punching each other's heads before ten words had been exchanged.

EASIEST WAY TO MARK TABLE-LINEN.—Leave a baby and some black-currant jam alone at the table for three minutes.

CURIOUS EPITAPH.—"Beneath this stone, a lump of clay, Lies Isabella Young, Who on the twenty-fourth of May, Began to hold her tongue."

A SWEET confectioner has taught his parrot to say "pretty creature" to every lady who enters the shop. His business is rapidly increasing.

"MICK," said a bricklayer to his labourer, "if you meet Patrick, tell him to make haste, as we are waiting for him." "Share an' I will," replied Mick; "and what will I tell him if I don't meet him?"

"Did any man ever yet make anything by opposing a woman's will?" exclaimed a tormented husband. "Yes, I have made a good deal by that sort of thing," answered his brother Richard. "But, Dick," responded the other, "you're a lawyer, and the woman whose will you opposed was always dead."

CARENE was for a time chef to the Prince Regent. One day the Prince addressed him with, "Carene, you will kill me with indigestion. I want to eat everything you send to table—*en vérité*." "Sir," answered the great cook, "my business is to provoke your appetite, not to regulate it."

MISTRESS (to Mary who is wearing soft shoes): "How you frightened me, Mary, walking about so quiet. I wish you would have some nails put in your shoes." Mary: "Please, mum, there are nails in 'um." Mistress: "Are you sure?" Mary: "Yes, mum, me toe nails."

AN old lawyer had occasion to stay at the residence of a brother-silk who was an old bachelor. In the morning the host was up and ready for breakfast, but his guest was about an hour late. The bachelor, wishing to reprove him, remarked that his motto, like the Duke of Wellington's, was that "the first turn should be a turn out." The Benedict, with ready wit, replied that his motto was that, "one good turn deserves another."

"My good Karl," said one German student to another, in profound admiration of his friend's capacity for beer-drinking, "how do you manage to stow away so many pints?" "You see, my dear fellow," responded Karl, "I'm making up for lost time. For a whole year I drank nothing but milk." "You drank nothing but milk for twelve months! In what year, pray, was that?" "In my first year of existence," answered Karl. The explanation was satisfactory.

A LADY employed a young girl about fifteen years old to assist her about her housework. One day she was making a cake and wished to put some kind of plums in it; so she put a dish down on the table with the plums, and told the girl to stone them, and, to show her how, she took up a plum and took the stone out, with the remark: "That is the way." Then, thinking the girl understood what she meant, she put the plum into her mouth, instead of the dish, and went away. What was her surprise, a short time after, to have the girl come into the room where she was, and tell her she had eaten all she could. When the lady went into the room where she had been at work, she found she had put all the stones into the dish and eaten all she could of the plums; she thinking that hard pieces—meaning the stones—would soften up when baked in the cake.

"No," said Mr. Carefulbody, "I never say a good word of any man. How do I know but he will be up for parliament some day or other?"

ARDENT DEVOTION.—"You have a devoted husband, Mrs. De Silva." "I should say I had. He is the dearest man in the world. Why, do you know, when I went home for a visit last year he lost ten pounds in weight. Wasn't that nice?"

A CURIOUS CUSTOM.—"It is a curious custom the Japanese have, my dear," remarked a husband, "of taking their shoes off when entering the house." "The custom is curious," replied the lady, "in the fact that it is practised at all hours instead of at night only;" and the husband said, "Yes," with a rising inflection, which was about all he could say.

CONJURER, pointing to a large cabinet: "Now, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to exhibit my concluding trick. I would ask any lady in the company to step on to the stage and stand in this cupboard. I will then close the door. When I open it again the lady will have vanished without leaving a trace behind." Brute in a front seat, aside to his wife: "I say, old woman, do me a favour, and step up."

"CHARLES," said a sharp-voiced woman to her husband, "do you remember it was that pair of slippers I presented you seven years ago last Christmas—the Christmas before we were married—that led to our union? You remember how nicely they fitted, don't you? Well, Charles, one day when we were going to a picnic you had your feet up on a seat, and when you weren't looking I took your measure. But for that pair of slippers, I don't believe we'd ever been married." A young unmarried man sitting close by immediately took his feet down from a seat.

COLERIDGE was a remarkably awkward horseman, so much so as generally to attract notice. He was once riding along the turnpike road, in the county of Durham, when a wag, approaching him, noticed his peculiarity, and, quite mistaking his man, thought the rider a fine subject for a little sport, when, as he drew near, he thus accosted Mr. C. "I say, young man, did you meet a tailor on the road?" "Yes," replied Mr. C., who was never at a loss for a rejoinder, "I did; and he told me, if I went a little farther, I should meet a goose!" The assailant was struck dumb, while the traveller jogged on.

ONCE at Marie Antoinette's private theatre, the little comic opera of *Rose and Colas* was performed by the Royal Family and Court. The Queen played in it; and just as she finished one of the songs, a sharp hiss was heard. The spectators looked at each other in surprise; but Marie, who felt at once that in all the crowd of grandees and courtiers there was but one person who would venture to take such a liberty, came forward to the front of the stage, and addressed herself to the King. After saluting the audience—"Sir," said she, "since you are not satisfied with my singing, if you will take the trouble to step out, your money shall be returned at the entrance." A thunder of applause greeted this sally, in which the King joined most heartily.

"MY DEAR," said a wife to her husband, "I know that I am dreadfully cross with you at times, that I am not patient as I should be; and I think the same can be said of you." "Yes, certainly," he frankly acknowledged; "I am almost as bad as you are." "What's that?" "I—I say that I am just as much to blame as you are." "I think," went on the lady, "that we ought to cultivate a mutual toleration of each other's faults;" and she bent over him and fondly kissed him. "You are not looking well to-night, dear," he said, stroking her hair. "No," she replied; "my feet pain me dreadfully." "That's because you wear shoes two sizes too small for you." Then the trouble began once more.

SOCIETY.

HER MAJESTY and Princess Beatrice honoured the recent marriage of Miss Mildred Prothero and Mr. Hankinson, at Whippingham Church, by their presence, afterwards visiting the rectory to congratulate the Rev. Canon and Mrs. Prothero, the bride's parents. The wedding, which was a very charming one, had been twice postponed at the special request of the Queen, who desired to witness the ceremony.

PRINCESS CHRISTIAN, the Duchess of Albany, and the Empress Eugénie are all to be at the Duke of Grafton's villa at Hyères, on the Riviera, together. There are those who say that Eugénie has done unwisely in delaying her departure for the Riviera till so late in the winter; the inclement weather we have had being exceedingly trying to her impaired health.

It has been pointed out, and it is interesting to note, that the opening by the Queen of the eleventh Parliament of her reign is a circumstance without parallel since the reign of Henry VI. Twelve Parliaments were summoned during George III.'s reign, but the last two were convoked by the Regent. Queen Elizabeth summoned eight Parliaments. Henry VI.'s Parliaments numbered twenty-one, but in those days they seldom lasted longer than one session.

The Queen of Italy, the "Lily of Savoy," is one of the most lovely women in Europe. Hers is specially one of those forms which set off dress to the highest advantage. A Paris paper describes some of her last dresses in a style which would, says a contemporary, make a woman's mouth water.

The marriage of the Earl of Airlie with Lady Mabel Gore was a splendid affair. The bride wore a very rich dress of white satin, the front of the tight-fitting bodice being covered with old lace to correspond with the petticoat, which was covered with the same lace; and up the centre was a cascade of lace and orange blossom. Her long train was lined with plush, and she wore a very large Brussels net veil, almost enveloping her dress. She had simply a spray of orange blossom in her hair. Her large bouquet was composed of orange blossom, camellias, stephanotis, and other white flowers, tied with a very broad satin bow and flounce of lace. The Prince of Wales and his son, Prince Albert Victor of Wales, were present.

The grown-up bridesmaids were very handsome dresses of white corded silk, with Zouave jackets, trimmed with gold lace; the petticoats plain in the front, but much puffed at the back, with a ruffling of the same materials at the bottom. They wore small white bonnets, trimmed with white velvet, the bow under the chin being fastened with a diamond brooch, the gift of the bridegroom. The children wore yoke-bodied dresses, with full skirts, tied with a broad white sash, and little white felt Greenaway bonnets, and white satin shoes. They all carried bouquets of lilies-of-the-valley and white camellias.

The marriage of Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh Suttie Gough, 10th (Prince of Wales's Own Royal) Hussars, eldest son of General Sir John Bloomfield Gough, G.C.B., with Beatrice, third daughter of Mr. Richard Hemming, of Bentley Manor, Worcestershire, was a very fashionable one. His Royal Highness Prince Albert Victor of Wales, attended by Captain the Hon. A. Greville, was present.

The bridesmaids wore dresses of white crepe de chine, trimmed with natural lynx fur, and wore small bonnets, trimmed with brown velvet and fur. Each wore a brooch, the design being a miniature hussar sword and a diamond "bee," and carried a bouquet of red, white, and blue flowers, the regimental colours, tied with ribbons to match, both being the bridegroom's gifts.

STATISTICS.

THE Bible is now printed in 287 different languages.

THE new House of Commons contains 112 lawyers, 69 manufacturers, 42 merchants, 35 journalists, 25 bankers, 24 brewers, and 31 shipowners. Not more than 50 out of 670 members are of the distinctly aristocratic class.

BACHELORS.—It has been calculated that the mortality among bachelors, from the age of thirty to forty-five is 27 per cent., while among married men of the same age it is only 18 per cent. For forty-one bachelors who attain the age of forty years, there are seventy-eight married men who attain the above age. The advantage in favour of married life is still more striking in persons of advanced age.

THE officers of the German navy number 984. The navy consists of thirteen ironclads, fourteen armoured vessels (gunboats for coast defence), nine cruiser frigates, ten cruiser corvettes, five cruisers, four unarmoured gunboats, eight dispatch boats, ten training ships, one surveying vessel, two transports, twelve vessels for harbour service, and ten pilot vessels and fireships.

GEMS.

THE most delicate, the most sensible of all pleasures consist in promoting the pleasures of others.

ONE great cause of our insensibility to the goodness of our Creator is the very extensiveness of His bounty.

WE should never grumble at those things we could have prevented, nor at those things we could not have prevented.

SATAN, when he would entrap a cautious person, assumes an angel-form till he carries his point, when the cloven foot appears.

THE bright genius is ready to be so forward as to often betray him into great errors of judgment, without a constant bridle on the tongue.

THE pleasure of commanding our passions is to be preferred before any sensual pleasure, because it is the pleasure of wisdom and discretion.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRIED SAUSAGES AND APPLES.—Take half a pound of sausages and six apples; slice four of the apples about as thick as a crown; cut the other two in quarters; fry them with the sausages to a light brown, lay the sausages in the middle of the dish, and the apples round them. Garnish with the quartered apples.

POTATO-SCONES.—Mash any cold potatoes which may have been left from a previous meal until quite smooth, adding a little salt. Knead out to the thickness required, and toast on a griddle, pricking them with a fork, to prevent blistering. Eaten with butter, they are equal to crumpets, are nutritious, and more wholesome.

TO ROAST A TURKEY.—OLD STYLE.—First cut it down the back, and with a sharp penknife bone it, then make your forcemeat thus: Take a large fowl, or a pound of veal, as much grated bread, half a pound of suet cut and beat very fine, a little beaten mace, two cloves, half a nutmeg grated, about a large teaspoonful of lemon peel, and the yolks of two eggs; mix all together with a little pepper and salt, fill up the places where the bones came out, and fill the body, that it may look just as it did before, sew up the back and roast it. You may have oyster sauce, or celery sauce, just as you please; put good gravy in the dish, and garnish with lemon, which is as good as anything. Be sure to leave the pinions on.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MEN are not to be judged by their looks, habits, and appearances, but by the character of their lives and conversations, and by their works. 'Tis better that a man's own works than that another man's words should praise him.

A PURE heart, a generous disposition, and a habit of self-control are all conducive to clear ideas and true views. Free from the blinding clouds of passion or prejudice, vanity or ambition, selfishness or envy, the mind arises in its dignity and asserts its native power. It is then able to examine reasons, sift motives, foresee results, and arrive at sound conclusions. Untrammelled by the fetters of excessive hope or fear, it is free to discern the laws which govern human nature and which determine right-doing.

THE loving heart is the strong heart. The generous hand is the hand to cling to when the path is difficult. There is room for the exercise of charity everywhere—in business, in society, and the church; but the first and chiefest need of it is at home, where it is the salt which keeps all things sweet, the aroma which makes every hour charming, and the divine light which shines starlike through all gloom and depression.

THE SANDAL-WOOD OF JAPAN.—Passing by a shop you see cords of wood cut into small blocks about six inches long. This, you learn, is nothing short of shoe-timber. These cords of wood will speedily be converted into shoes of various sizes, at prices ranging all the way from twopence to tenpence. One feels quite exalted in a pair of tenpence shoes. The wood is called kiri, and is very light. The clogs are still further lightened by hollowing out the centre. So, in point of fact, there is little truth in calling the shoes heavy, although they appear so to the inexperienced observer. It must be admitted, though, that they are unreasonably clumsy. Sometimes the shoes worn by the ladies are lacquered, and are fastened by a velvet band passing from either side over the lower part of the instep, and between the first and second toes. With this same kind of wood is made a bureau provided with strong iron handles, and the whole box is adjustable in horizontal sections, one piled above another. Owing to the lightness of the wood these boxes may be filled with clothing, and carried off on the shoulders of the coolie in case of fires, which so often vex the people of Tokio.

A PROMINENT NOSE.—The pages of history are full of deeds of brave men and triumphs of fair women whose noses were unduly prominent. If fashion is at odds with such a feature, then the wise woman who is thus afflicted will compel fashion to yield to it, and will wisely avoid the straight-haired, straight-collared order of attire which renders her nose too conspicuous. She is bound in justice to herself to do this, for she is dealing with almost the only feature which no efforts of hers can change. Experiments with spring compressors result only in confusion. While an exaggerated mouth may be modified, and an expansive ear concealed, the nose must be left to itself, naked to the eye of criticism and the teeth of the north wind. The fashionable rage for novelty has much to answer for with regard to the discretion of "the human form divine." It has alternately bleached and blackened the hair, and given to deadly poisons a permanent place on the toilet table. It has squeezed the foot, twisted the ankles, and prescribed a gait that is half waddle and all wobble. But so long as no question is made of introducing the board of the Flatheads and the foot bandages of China, it may be assumed that the nose, whether bulbous, beakish, tipilted, or "sharp as a pen," will be permitted to remain untouched. Whatever its shape, it is sure to be suited to the other features. Unvexed nature never makes a mistake in such matters.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

HYACINTH.—Certainly not.

ARTHUR C.—Try coconut oil. Fair writing.

HAIDER KING.—1. Nothing but what is positively injurious. 2. Yes.

OLIVE LYSTER.—We cannot tell you of such a book-stall. Probably if you wrote to a good firm of book-sellers, they could get the work for you.

L. S.—1. For the voice, let your friend try half a pint of strong beef-tea, cold, every morning. 2. Out the corn, and then paint with iodine.

DOLLY AND MAGDALENE.—1. Pe-ne-o-pe. 2. We cannot inform you. Ladies' ages are discreetly withheld in peeraes. 3. Annie means "gracious," Julia "soft hatred."

E. AMBROSE.—The dye you name, to be efficacious, must be highly injurious, and we therefore refrain from giving the receipt. Keep the hair very clean, and thoroughly well brushed, and it will be bright enough.

BUMPKINS.—Not a very pleasant *nom de plume*. 1. The 28th June, 1882, fell on Wednesday. 2. Her Majesty has four daughters living; Princess Alice died some time ago. 3. Very good writing; not a bit too large.

C. M. N.—You had better wait until you have learned the trade and saved a little money before venturing into the matrimonial fold. Fifteen shillings a week is hardly sufficient to feed and clothe two persons. Writing good.

F. B. N.—You may learn to spell and improve your present passable penmanship by attending an evening school. During your leisure moments, improve the knowledge gained by studying books devoted to the subjects you wish to master, and in a short time you will be surprised at the progress made.

MINNIE.—A young lady's visiting card should have "Miss" prefixed to the name in every case. If the owner of the card is the eldest unmarried lady in the family, it is not necessary to use any name but the surname, but in most cases it is better to use the Christian name also, to save your friends from any doubt as to the identity of the owner of the card.

WINIFRED S.—1. A weak solution of sulphate of zinc, applied night and morning. 2. Nut brown hair. Dark brown eyes would go well with it. 3. Generally dimples are evidence of good-nature. 4. For the teeth, prepared chalk as a dentifrice; for the hands, keep them covered as much as possible, and use oatmeal in the water you wash them in. 5. Very slovenly writing.

LITA.—1. There is no fixed rule in regard to which arm a gentleman should offer a lady. In court circles, in Europe, the left arm is always offered—the reason alleged being that the sword arm must be left free; but most ladies prefer to take the right arm, because in this way they have the use of their right hand to manage their train. As the ladies in this country very properly rule in such matters, it is more usual to offer the right arm than the left. 2. Usually, but not always, the gentleman sits at the right of the lady. 3. The same remarks apply to leading a lady away from the table as to bringing her to it. 4. A gentleman should allow a lady to precede him in entering and leaving any building, except where the presence of a crowd makes it desirable that he should lead the way.

C. B. S.—As a matter of fact, it is probable that a love of money is a strong motive with nearly all speculators. But it is possible for a man to love the scheming and manoeuvring which are necessary to carry on large speculative operations more than he loves the money which is at stake. A person who is thus constituted is like a devotee of chess, who cares more for the game itself than he cares for any money that may be wagered upon it. Such a chess player takes supreme delight in making irresistible combinations on the board, and overwhelming his opponent with superior skill, whether there is any money at issue on the game or not. It is perhaps sometimes the same with enthusiastic speculators. They have a passion for making wonderful combinations in the market, and delight in circumventing their competitors in all manner of surprising ways. But after they have succeeded they are sometimes indifferent to the money they have made, and waste it foolishly or recklessly. Such speculators are not apt to succeed in the long run. It is only those who love to make money by splendid combinations, and who also love the money they make, that hold out successfully to the end; and now and then even one of that kind suddenly goes down in irrevocable disaster.

H. H. W.—Flowers may be preserved for many months by dipping them carefully, as soon as gathered, in perfectly clear gum-water. Allow them to drain for two or three minutes, and then arrange in a vase. The gum, by forming a complete coating on the stems and petals, preserves their shape and colour for a long time after they have dried. Another method is as follows:—A vessel with a movable bottom and cover is provided, and, having removed the cover from it, a piece of metallic gauze of moderate fineness is fixed over it, and the cover replaced. A quantity of sand is then taken, sufficient to fill the vessel, and passed through a sieve into an iron pot, where it is heated, with the addition of a small quantity of stearine, carefully stirred, so as to thoroughly mix the ingredients. The amount of stearine to be added is at the rate of 1 pound to each 50 pounds of sand, care being taken not to add too much of the former, as they would sink to the bottom and injure

the flowers. The vessel, with its cover on and the gauze beneath it, is then turned upside down, and the bottom being removed, the flowers to be operated upon are carefully placed upon the gauze, and the sand gently poured in so as to cover them entirely, the leaves being thus prevented from touching each other. The vessel is then put into a hot place—such, for example, as the top of a baker's oven—and allowed to remain for fifteen hours. The flowers thus become dried, and also retain their natural colours. The receptacle still remains bottom upward, the lid is taken off, and the sand runs away through the gauze, leaving the flowers uninjured.

W. G. B.—The Lapps, or Laplanders, were originally inhabitants of Finland. According as they are fishermen or reindeer herders they are distinguished as "Sea Lapps" and "Mountain Lapps," and other occupy settled habitations or lead a nomadic life. The women are very skilful in making garments, and the men cut out of wood with amazing ingenuity, considering the imperfect tools they use, all the utensils they need. Many still hunt with bow and arrow, but most of them have gained possession of guns. The Lappish language is related to the Finnish, but has of late incorporated many Swedish words. The Lapps are extremely small in stature. Their hair is black and straight, their skin yellow. They dress in furs, with trousers and boots of reindeer skin. They have been converted to Christianity, and belong to the Lutheran church in Norway and Sweden, and to the Greek church in Russia. When heathens, they worshipped five orders of divinities.

"DAISY IS TIRED, MAMMA."

"Oh, mamma, dear, stop sewing for a while, And take your little Daisy on your knee. I do not want to play. It seems a mile Across the yard. I'm tired as tired can be! Dolly is cross. Something has tired her, too, She will not open now her eyes of blue."

"I found some pretty leaves of gold and red, But Rover jumped on me and made me fall. They broke in his rough play. I cried, and said: 'Dog, have yourself.' But dogs won't have at all. Please take me up and rock me. Mamma, do! Then sing to me, and tell a story too."

The mother answered: "I'm too busy, child; You must amuse yourself; so go and play; I can't be bothered now; you make me wild; I must embroider your new dress to-day. What!—on the floor? Well, stay if you will; But stop that crying. Daisy, child, be still!"

Ah me! one week has passed, and sick with grief, Wreny with weeping, pallid almost wild. That mother sighs—though sighs bring no relief— And wails: "Lord, once again to clasp my child! I did not heed her when that day she pined, Nor seek nor kiss her. Now, my child is dead!"

"Alas! the robe on which I wrought became The very last in which her form was clad. I saw her in the caasket—'twas the same. Break, heart, far better break than be so sad. Would God that I might rock my child once more, And sing to her one verse of baby-love!"

Ah, mothers, busy every day and hour, Making, perhaps, the clothes your darlings wear, Lay work aside more often, that the power Of love and kisses their wee hearts may share. Death stings unborn where no reproaches lurk; Then pet the children more, though less you work.

S. L. S.

JEANNE.—The old English custom by "banns" is decidedly the more manly choice for marriage. Marriage in England is, in the eyes of the law, essentially a public ceremony. It can only be performed in churches, in registered chapels, in Quakers' meeting-houses, in synagogues—that is, in some recognised place of public worship—and in the office of the superintendent registrar. To render the contract which is made in the registrar's office valid, six persons must be present: the superintendent registrar, the marriage registrar, two credible witnesses, the bridegroom, and the bride. The superintendent registrar receives the declarations, the registrar records the particulars of the transactions, and all six persons sign the registrar. In registered chapels the minister or the priest takes the place of the superintendent registrar; the presence of the marriage registrar is indispensable. The registrar is not present at marriages in churches of the establishment.

ERNESTUS.—He is mistaken. There is at least one very full and perfect description of our Saviour's personal appearance which is believed to be genuine. Out of the few valuable manuscripts in the records of Rome, which Napoleon did not destroy, there was one written by Tubulus Lentulus, Governor of Judea to the Senate of Rome when Caesar was Emperor. It was the custom of the governor to write to headquarters concerning any important event that transpired within his province. Tubulus Lentulus wrote of the advent of the strange man whom his followers called the Son of God. He described him as a man of stature somewhat tall and comely, with a ruddy countenance, such as the beholder may both love and fear. "His hair is the colour of a filbert when fully ripe, plain to his ear, whence downward it is of a more Orient colour, curling and waving to his shoulders. In the middle of his head there is a

seam of long hair after the manner of the Nazirites. His forehead is plain and delicate, his face without spot or wrinkle, beautiful with a comely white and red, his mouth and nose are perfectly shaped, his beard is the colour of his hair and thick, not of length but forked. In reproval he is terrible; in admonishing, courteous; in speaking, very modest and wise; in proportion, well shaped. None have ever seen him laugh; many have seen him weep. A man for his surpassing beauty excelling the children of man."

CURIOS.—There are two explanations given of the origin of the phrase, "by hook or by crook." The old Bodmeian Register of 1325 has several sentences which would seem to make the phrase originate in an old forest law that allowed the poor tenantry to pick up what sticks they found on the ground, and also such dead or broken branches as they could pull down with their crooks. Another explanation is that the phrase refers to the hook which tramps carry about and the crook which is the bishop's crozier. To get a thing by hook or crook means by fair means as with the bishop's crozier, or by trickery as with the tramp's hook. "Thomas ye Hymer" has allusions in his "Parliament" that would lead one to infer this latter as the origin of the phrase.

JESSIE.—The safest remedy for the removal of hair from a lady's face is the following:—The hair should be plucked out perseveringly by the root with a pair of tweezers; the skin, having been washed twice a day with warm, soft water, without soap, should be treated with the following wash, commonly called milk of roses: Beat four ounces of sweet almonds in a mortar, and add half-an-ounce of white sugar during the process. Reduce the whole to a paste by pounding; then add, in small quantities at a time, eight ounces of rose-water. The emulsion thus formed should be strained through a fine cloth; and the residue again pounded, while the strained fluid should be bottled in a large stoppered vial. To the party mass in the mortar add half-an-ounce of sugar and eight ounces of rose-water, and drain again. This process must be repeated three times. To the fluid that is thus obtained add twenty grains of the bichloride of mercury, dissolved in two ounces of alcohol, and shake the mixture for five minutes. The fluid should be applied with a towel, immediately after washing, and the skin gently rubbed with a dry cloth till perfectly dry.

GEORGE.—The habit of stammering can only be counteracted by the cultivation of a habit of correct speaking, and the latter can only be acquired by studying the processes of speech, the relation of breath to articulate sounds, the positions of the tongue and the other oral organs in moulding the outward stream of air, and by a patient application of these principles in slow and watchful practice. The lungs constitute a pair of bellows, and the mouth, in all its varying shapes, the nozzle of the bellows. All sounds originate in the throat, and all effort in speech must be thrown back behind the articulating organs, which must be kept passive, yielding to the air, always opening to give it exit, and never resisting it by action of the tongue or of the jaw. The head must be held firmly on the neck, to give free play to the attached organs, and the great principle, that speech is breath, must never be lost sight of; and that, while distinctness depends on precision and sharpness of the oral actions, fluency depends on the unrestrained emission of the material of speech—the air we breathe.

AMY.—In making almond macaroons, blanch the almonds in boiling water the day before stripping of the skins and pounding them when perfectly cold—a few at a time—in a mortar, adding from time to time a little rose-water. When beaten to a smooth paste, stir in, to a pound of the sweet almonds, a generous tablespoonful of essence of bitter almonds; cover closely and set away in a cold place until the morning. Then to a pound of the nuts allow one pound of powdered sugar, the beaten whites of eight eggs, one teaspoonful of nutmeg, and one teaspoonful of arrowroot. Stir the sugar and white of egg lightly together, then whip in gradually the almond paste. Line a broad baking-pan with buttered white paper; drop upon this spoonfuls of the mixture at such distances apart as shall prevent their running together. Sift powdered sugar thickly upon each, and bake in a quick oven to a delicate brown. Try the mixture first, to make sure that it is of the right consistency, and if the macaroons run into irregular shapes, beat in more sugar. This will hardly happen, however, if the mixture be already well-beaten.

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